

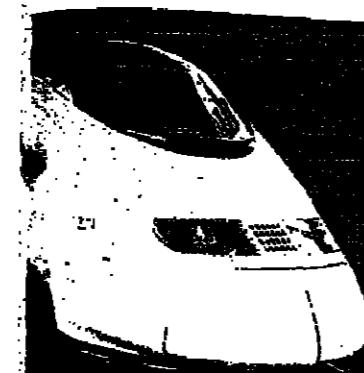


THE INDEPENDENT

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SATURDAY 6 FEBRUARY 1999

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Sex between teachers and pupils can be 'educative' – schools chief

BY JUDITH JUDD
AND BEN RUSSELL

TEACHERS SHOULD not automatically be sacked for having relationships with sixth-formers, Chris Woodhead, the Chief Inspector of Schools, has told student teachers.

The "messes" involved in such relationships can be "educative", he said during a question-and-answer session after a lecture at Exeter University. His remarks, which come as legislation making it a criminal offence for teachers to have sexual relationships with 16- and 17-year-olds before Parliament provoked controversy among MPs, teachers and parents.

In reply to a question whether teachers who had relationships with pupils had any place in the education system, Mr Woodhead said that the law barring sexual relations with those under 16 was clear; and "as adults or relative adults we have a responsibility to those who are younger than us and therefore it isn't a good idea at all."

"But I don't think necessarily that a teacher should be automatically drummed out of the profession. I think human beings can get themselves into messes and I think those messes can sometimes be experiential and educative on both sides."

Under the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Bill passing through the Commons, teachers face up to two years in jail if they have sex or "any sexual activity" with pupils under 18 at their school.

Government guidelines already warn that teachers who have an "inappropriate" relationship with a pupil are "most likely" to be banned from work-



Chris Woodhead: 'Human beings can get into messes and I think those messes can sometimes be experiential and educative on both sides'

Ian Waldie/Reuters

ing in schools, even if the pupil is over the age of consent.

Nearly 200 student teachers and academics attended the lecture on education 10 days ago. Mr Woodhead said yesterday that the exchange had to be seen in context. "I don't think it is the job of a chief inspector to

pontificate about these things.

I was asked a question on something completely different from the topic of the lecture and I didn't think I could duck it. In most circumstances I think a teacher who has a relationship with a pupil should be barred from the profession. I would not

have any problems with the new legislation."

Gary Streeter, chairman of the Conservative Christian Fellowship and MP for Devon South West, said that Mr Woodhead's comments would set alarm bells ringing. "Such relationships have to be seen as a disciplinary

offence ... although teenagers think they are grown up, they are at a very impressionable age and there is a risk of abuse."

David Hart, general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, which opposes the Bill, said: "Most heads would regard these remarks

coming from a chief inspector as extraordinary. Parents commit their children to the care of a school. They expect the school to respect that trust."

Joe Ashton, the Labour MP for Bassettaw, who persuaded the Government to insert a measure on the issue into the

approved by an overwhelming majority," Mr Ashton said.

Mr Woodhead has become the focus of teachers' anger for his attacks on progressive teaching methods and his suggestion that 15,000 bad teachers should be sacked. More recently, he argued that national tests were unreliable and that schools were cheating to boost their results.

Teachers reacted angrily to his comments last night, but the UK's biggest parents' group was more supportive.

Patrick Tobin, headmaster of Stewart's Melville College, Edinburgh, and former chairman of the Headmasters and Mistresses Conference, said: "In a professional relationship you are answerable for your actions. There has to be a professional ethic whereby teachers – or doctors or any self-regarding profession – know that if they become involved in an intimate relationship with somebody with whom they have a trust relationship they are endangering their professional status."

But Margaret Morrissey, of the National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations, said: "I think parents would be concerned if an older man was involved who might be divorced or have a family. But the majority would have no problem with a man who is, say, only four years older who meets socially with a sixth-former outside school."

Professor Ted Wragg, of Exeter University's department of education, said: "We lay down the law to students... making it clear that if they were so foolish as to have any kind of relationship with a pupil they would be kicked off the course. If they were in the teaching profession, they would be kicked out of the profession."

FRIDAY TELEVISION

BBC1

ITV (11/16)

Rover in limbo after BMW sacks bosses

By MICHAEL HARRISON
Business Editor

parties came after an all-day meeting of the BMW supervisory board called by the controlling shareholders, the Quandt family, to resolve a crisis surrounding Rover.

Earlier the Government had made clear that there would be financial aid available to BMW to keep Longbridge open.

Closure of the factory would cause up to 50,000 job losses in the West Midlands and spark a political storm. Stephen Byers, Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, urged BMW to honour the agreement it reached with unions late last year to keep the plant open.

"The workforce have made changes. We are now looking to BMW to say that it's business as usual; that there are no more changes that they want to continue with their commitment to Longbridge," he told BBC television.

Mr Byers, who was due to talk to BMW management last night, also indicated that financial help would be available

The news of both men's de-

cision to BMW. The company had been seeking between £200m and £300m from the Government to support development of a new medium-sized car at Longbridge.

"It's no secret that we have been discussing possible support to help them improve productivity to help them build some new facilities at Longbridge," he said.

However, in what may prove an ominous sign for the plant, BMW has yet to put in a formal application for aid, suggesting it may have already decided not to go ahead with the new model in the UK.

Mr Pischetsrieder announced in December that BMW had agreed a new productivity deal with unions involving 2,500 job cuts and efficiency savings of £150m a year. In return, BMW agreed to invest £400m to build a new Mini at Longbridge and confirmed it was the preferred site for a new car, code-named the RS5, to replace the Rover 200-400 series.

Byers pledges support for Longbridge, page 5

Jordan prays as its king returns to die

By PATRICK COCKBURN
in Amman

KING HUSSEIN returned to die in Jordan yesterday after treatment for his cancer in the US failed. He was rushed from the aircraft in an ambulance to a closely guarded hospital where, a palace official said, he was "near death".

In Amman, mosques were packed with people praying for his recovery. "I hope God gives him more days," said one Jordanian who had just left a mosque. "The Jordanians and the Palestinians both liked him." Earlier the king's doctor had said that his "internal organs had failed" after an unsuccessful bone-marrow transplant. During his flight from the US he was kept alive by a life-support system.

King Hussein has ruled Jordan since 1953. He will be succeeded by his eldest son, Crown Prince Abdullah, who was appointed as his heir two weeks ago, when the king briefly returned to Jordan, declaring himself cured. He suffered an almost immediate relapse.

The king died just before his last journey home

As rain lashed down on the Jordanian capital yesterday, Jordanian radio played solemn music, but said only that the king had come back to go into hospital. Jordanians are relying on foreign radio stations and satellite television for information on the king's health. His death will create uncertainty in one of the pivotal states in the Middle East, since so little is known about his successor. Crown Prince Abdullah has strong support among senior officers in the army and security services and

will take over the throne without resistance, but the last-minute change in the succession may lead to longer-term divisions within the Jordanian royal family.

The king is genuinely popular among ordinary Jordanians, few of whom have known any other monarch. Some people were openly crying in the streets yesterday morning as they heard the news that the king was close to death.

Plucky Little King, page 3
Leading article, Review, page 3

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'Plucky Little King' who earned the crown of peace in the Middle East

TO THE end, he was a king. Hussein ibn Talal had spoken of his own mortality many times, and his last journey yesterday - 6,000 miles from an American deathbed to the land he ruled for 46 years - became him. Soldiers prefer to die at home.

A military man, a field commander, Sandhurst graduate. King Hussein had the disconcerting habit when I first met him of calling me "Sir" - he used it with everyone, a gesture of respect that humbled the visitor (and was intended to).

That's why we called him the Plucky Little King. His folly at joining Egypt's war against Israel in 1957 was compounded in 1990 by his support for Saddam (who also betrayed the king - please God HZS not at the moment).

Hussein demonstrated an equal but more personal recklessness - hubris, perhaps? - when he rode in the cold, rain-lashed streets of Amman last week in an open-top car. After his first brush with cancer, I asked the King if he had been cured of his illness. "The doctors gave me an excellent bill of health," he replied - how painful those words sound now - and then I noticed the packet of cigarettes lying on the table in front of him. "Ah, yes," he said. "These are the only things I haven't yet given up." And he flicked his finger at the packet in disdain.

If his desire for peace showed vision, he lacked foresight. With their usual obsequiousness, Western as well as Arab leaders have been praising the King for returning to Jordan last week to find his brother Hassan and create his eldest son crown prince. "Setting his affairs in order" was what they called it. But even if we ignore the lack of any democratic process for the succession, it was a bit late in the day to start switching your crown princes around. The man who had cemented relationships with scores of kings and generals and presidents - albeit not always impressive relationships - was suddenly replaced by a man who knew none of them. No wonder Jordanians fear the future.

For Prince Abdullah is going to have a spot of bother with the kings and presidents at that funeral. Mr Clinton, for example, will be keen to get the new monarch to set the Iraqi opposition up with heart and home in Amman, perhaps even to risk a little military foray into Iraq to set up a "safe haven" for Saddam's enemies.

In truth, it was the Israelis who drove the Hashemites from Palestine, but Clinton's words - despite the gutless nature of the man who uttered them - somehow got it right. What king would ever turn up at his own state security jail to drive his most vociferous political prisoner home?

Leith Shubailah had infuriated the monarch - he was a man easily riled - and was slapped into clink for asking why the queen wept at Yitzhak Rabin's funeral.

When the King arrived at the

BY ROBERT FISK
in Amman

prison, Shubailah delayed him 10 minutes while he said goodbye to his fellow inmates. Hussein waited patiently for him. Would Saddam (who prefers to string his prisoners up) have done that? Would King Fahd? Would President Mubarak? Would Benjamin Netanyahu? Perhaps it is this which distinguishes the King among the monsters of the Middle East, he appeared such a reasonable man.

He was also, in an odd way, a careless man. His folly at joining Egypt's war against Israel in 1957 was compounded in 1990 by his support for Saddam (who also betrayed the king - please God HZS not at the moment).

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The Israelis would be smiling along with that idea. At which point Saddam would become a threat.

But refuse the United States president - which is what Jordanians would want him to do - and Abdullah may start his reign with an unsympathetic if not downright hostile Washington at his back. Threaten Saddam and the Americans will love him. Ignore Washington and his people will love him; it's the same old trap his father walked into in 1990.

But what Abdullah cannot



King Hussein, credited by his subjects with protecting them from the country's powerful neighbours Gamma

be is his father. If relations are breaking down between Egypt and Sudan, call King Hussein. If there's civil war in Lebanon, ask King Hussein's advice. When Arafat and Netanyahu cannot abide each other at the

Yala Plantation, drag King Hussein from his sick bed to sort them out - much good did it do the monarch, who was betrayed yet again.

But it symbolised what the PLK was so good at: defusing

the Middle East explosion. He was, in a very real sense, the region's political Bomb Disposal Officer, the one man who could be relied on to calm nerves,

order bystanders to open their windows and then gently, firmly, withdraw the detonator of war.

That's why Arabs and Israels fear for the future. What are they going to do now that there is no one to defuse the bombs?

ly, withdraw the detonator of war.

That's why Arabs and Israels fear for the future. What are they going to do now that there is no one to defuse the bombs?

Prince Mohammed
Brother, born 1940

Princess Dina
Wife, 1955-56 (divorced)
ne Dina Abdel Hamid

Princess Alla
born 1956

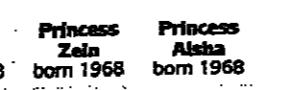


THE ROYAL SUCCESSION

Prince Ali
Brother, born 1947

Princess Haya
Wife, 1974

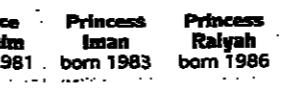
Princess Zain
Wife, 1968



Prince Hassan
Brother, born 1947
former crown prince

Princess Moira
Wife, 1978-present
ne Lisa Halaby

Prince Hamzah
Wife, 1980



Prince Hashim
Brother, born 1961

Princess Iman
Wife, 1963

Princess Ralayah
Wife, 1963

Jordan's balancing act faces serious upset

BY PATRICK COCKBURN

IT WAS always a balancing act. Jordan is a buffer state between more powerful countries, notably Israel and Iraq. King Hussein's political career was spent playing his enemies off against each other.

It was not easy. The king needed to keep in with the great powers, but preserve his nationalist credentials. An early act of the young Harrow and Sandhurst-educated monarch was to fire his British military adviser "Clubb Pasha". In 1967 he joined Egypt and Syria to fight Israel only to lose the West Bank. In 1991 he won

resources or defences - left him no choice. The king also knew any foreign policy failures would have immediate domestic consequences.

More than half the population of Jordan is Palestinian, largely excluded from power but dominating private business. He needed an Israeli guarantee against Iraq, but not at the price of permanently alienating the Palestinians.

He played both ends against the middle because he believed Jordan's weakness - 4.4 million people and no natural

economic and few political dividends is an unpopular among Jordanians and Palestinians alike, although it got him back into the good graces of the US. A year later he broke with Iraq.

But negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians are now stalled and Saddam Hussein has survived. Both have felt free to send their assassination squads into the streets of Amman.

Washington is pressuring Jordan to turn itself into a base for action against Iraq, a policy wildly unpopular among ordinary Jordanians.

There is a much bigger question mark over the future of Jordanian policy than expected a month ago. This is because of the dismissal of Crown Prince Hassan, the king's brother and primary lieutenant. The new heir to the throne, the king's eldest son Prince Abdullah, is an unknown quantity.

For the moment Jordan is weak because part of its strength was the astuteness and prestige of King Hussein. Its neighbours are waiting to see if the house King Hussein built will hold together.

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THE INDEPENDENT
Saturday 6 February 1999

ROVER CRISIS

Byers pledges to save Longbridge

THE GOVERNMENT yesterday made it clear that BMW would be offered aid from the taxpayer to keep Rover's giant Longbridge plant open.

Stephen Byers, Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, said that it was no secret that ministers had been discussing possible support to keep the plant open and build a new model at Longbridge.

Nevertheless, ministers and unions agree that the survival of the plant has never been more uncertain than now.

If the works does shut, it would not just mean the disappearance of another piece of Britain's industrial landscape. It would represent the end of an era: in motoring, industrial re-

BY MICHAEL HARRISON
Business Editor

lations, and manufacturing.

A vast and sprawling complex concealing 12 miles of road, nine miles of railway and an immense subterranean network of tunnels, Longbridge has always been more than just a factory. It is a way of life, a small town in its own right providing a livelihood for 30,000 car workers at its peak.

It was a symbol of Britain's post-war industrial prowess and it became the battleground on which left and right fought for the hearts and minds of the working man during the epic union struggles of the 1970s.

Books have been devoted to

the sociology of Longbridge - the birthplace of the affluent working class. It was Longbridge man who begat Mondeo man. Now BMW man looks ready to decree that there is no place in the modern car industry for Longbridge.

The end of car production there would blow a great big hole in the West Midlands economy. Some 50,000 jobs are dependent on the plant. Every day some 500 suppliers deliver components into the site with a total annual value of £1.5bn.

But the end of Longbridge would also tear a huge piece out of the fabric of our motoring history. The Austin Seven, the Big Seven and the Cambridge models of the inter-war years, the

Mini, and the Austin 1100, the car which became the UK's best seller for most of the 1960s, were all produced there. Together with its sister plant at Cowley in Oxford, Longbridge once accounted for one in every three cars sold in Britain.

Car sales figures for last month, show that Rover's share of the market shrank to less than 5 per cent.

The plant's origins date back to 1905. Riding around Birmingham on his bicycle in search of somewhere to start making cars, Herbert Austin came across the disused White and Pike printing works. Situated next to the Midland Railway's main Birmingham to Gloucester and Hereford branch

lines, it was an ideal location for bringing parts in and taking finished cars out.

He bought the site for £7,750 and began production two years later. In its first year Longbridge had produced just 23 cars. But by 1910 the workforce had reached 1,000 and Austin had added a night shift.

The advent of war in 1914 turned Longbridge into an aircraft and munitions factory.

By 1918 it had produced more than 2,000 aeroplanes, including the famous SE5a fighter, 8 million shells, 650 guns and 500 armoured cars.

The inter-war years saw the return to car production and the introduction of the Austin Seven and Cambridge models.

In

1964

production

reached

an all-time peak of 345,245 vehicles. Since then, however, it has been more or less downhill for Longbridge.

It developed a reputation

for industrial unrest.

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Longbridge began production of the Metro at the new west works. The facility was bristling with so much new technology that it doubled Britain's population of welding robots.

But the arrival of the Japanese transplant factories in the 1980s, starting with Nissan, showed the British motor industry what an efficient car plant really looked like. In 1997, Nissan's Sunderland plant was the most productive in Europe with an output of 98 cars per man. Longbridge ranked twenty-fifth alongside Skoda with a production rate of 33 cars per man.

It is that one chilling statistic as much as anything that may well do for Longbridge.

Launch hit by board upsets

BY JOHN SIMISTER

THE TIMING could not be worse. Rover has just launched its new model 75 to the world's press, and now its parent company, BMW, has ditched chairman Bernd Pischetsrieder from the board.

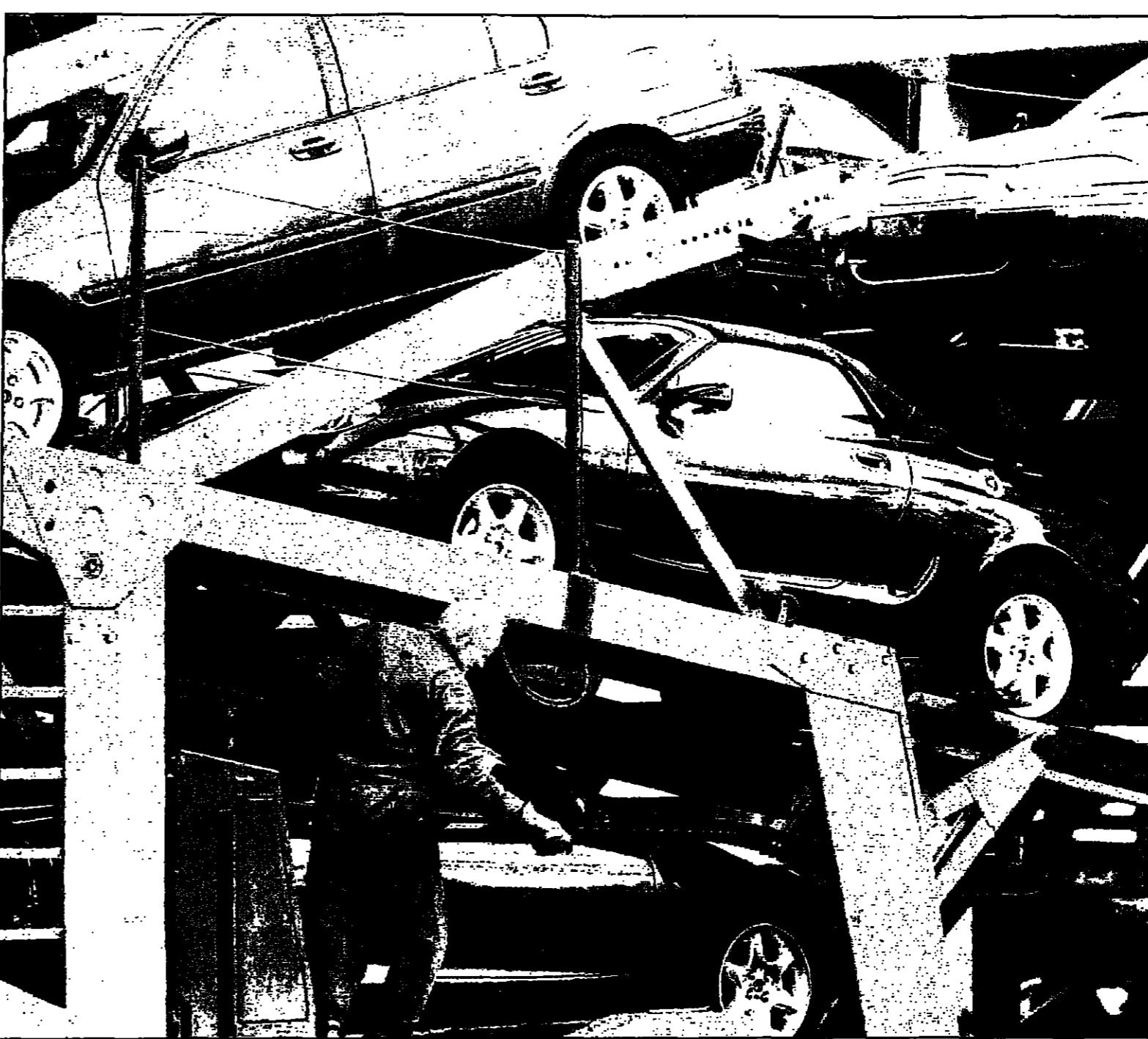
There was a similar example of unfortunate timing at last October's Birmingham Motor Show. Rover unveiled the handsome model 75 just as BMW put the squeeze on Rover's Longbridge plant in Birmingham.

What is a Rover, anyway? It used to stand for something a cut above the rest, but recent Rovers have drawn heavily on Honda underpinnings, and come across as cars created on the cheap. Rovers nowadays are bought by company fleets trying to be visibly British, or by the elderly.

Rovers, despite the cosmetic pretensions, feel cheaper, looser and more plasticky, and people think they go wrong a lot, even though that's no longer true.

Their real rivals are cars from Ford and Vauxhall, and in export markets that is how they are perceived.

Plans are in place to change all this, and the 75 is the first stage. If Rover is allowed to move fast, there is still enough residual public awareness of Rover's past values for a viable revival. But if BMW continues its public sabotage, it just isn't going to happen.



John Voss

Soft line with Rover was the downfall of car-loving boss

BERND PISCHETSRIEDER, dismissed yesterday from the board of BMW, is not averse to taking a high-performance model out for a spin and wrecking it.

A soft-spoken Anglophile, he was accused by his German colleagues of having been too kind to Rover's British management.

He joined BMW in 1973 after studying engineering, and rose quickly through the ranks.

He acquired international experience between 1982 and 85 as head of the South African subsidiary.

Mr Pischetsrieder took over the reins of BMW in 1993, and wasted little time taking the family-owned company on a dangerous road. He saw the Bavarian firm as too isolated among the behemoths that were taking over the world,

and set about expansion. Only a year after into his reign, he stunned the automotive world by buying Rover, which was then allied with Honda. The move was widely greeted in the car industry as a bold step to broaden BMW's product range with a mass-market, front-wheel drive model range that would bring technological benefits for the rear-wheel drive BMW line.

Although Rover was a money-loser, most believed that BMW would be better off without it. As rumours spread about his imminent dismissal, Mr Pischetsrieder experienced the final humiliation: BMW share prices soared by 7 per cent.

The recent revelation that profits fell last year, despite a record turnover, appeared to seal his fate.

Munich, and the money-men in Frankfurt, decided BMW would be better off without him. As rumours spread about his imminent dismissal, Mr Pischetsrieder experienced the final humiliation: BMW share prices soared by 7 per cent.

problems at the British plants, which he concealed from his board, he would not contemplate a tougher line with British managers, as advocated by his adversaries.

Many factors were responsible for Rover's poor performance - notably the strong pound - and Mr Pischetsrieder asked for patience. The owners, though, grew increasingly concerned.

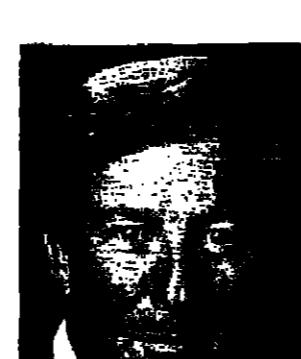
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Nor did he stop reminding whoever would care to listen that the Rover project has been a flop. He continued to advocate limiting the Rover range just to Mins and Land Rovers, and possibly closing Longbridge.

In personality Mr Reitzle is the very opposite of Mr Pischetsrieder. While Mr Pischetsrieder is something of a quiet eccentric, Mr Reitzle is loud and brash, with film-star looks and a lifestyle to match. He currently lives with the German TV personality Nina Ruge.

A lot to his vision, company insiders said.

Mr Reitzle never missed an opportunity to point out that his baby, BMW, was growing from



Reitzle: Brilliant engineer with go-getting personality



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Dying friend saved me, says climber

By KATE WATSON-SMITH

A CLIMBER WHO saw his friend die of hypothermia as they lay stranded together on a mountain ridge for six days, said yesterday that he owed his life to his companion.

Jamie Andrew, who suffered severe frostbite in all his limbs, was plucked by helicopter from a ridge on Les Droites, in the Mont Blanc range on Sunday.

Mr Andrew's friend, Jamie Fisher, 28, died in the freezing temperatures.

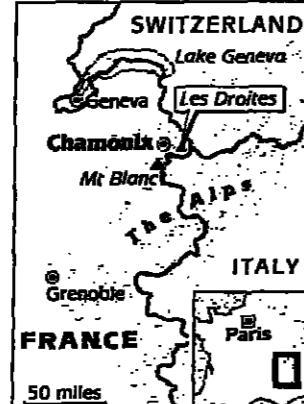
Speaking from his hospital bed for the first time since his ordeal, Mr Andrew, 29, said: "The one thing that kept us going was our friendship."

"We buoyed each other up. On several occasions we had to keep each other going to survive. Sadly, only I made it."

Mr Andrew, who may have to leave parts of his fingers, ears, and toes amputated, was too ill to speak before yesterday.

His father, Howard, who flew out from the family's home in Glasgow to be at his son's bedside in Chamonix, said that his son had been either fully asleep or drowsy for most of the week.

But yesterday he had recovered enough to talk to the *Daily Record* about the accident and said he was not afraid of amputation. "The loss of my limb is far sadder to me than my injury that I have sus-



tained myself. I am not a hero. If anything I am slightly tough. I wanted to get out alive. There is nothing heroic about that."

The two men, who shared a flat in Edinburgh, set off from Chamonix in eastern France 12 days ago. Their aim was to tackle the Droites peak, in the Mont Blanc range.

They were forced to halt on the 13,000ft ridge when they became trapped in a sudden storm which blew up as they tried to descend from the mountain. The men, both experienced climbers, dug a snowhole under their bivouac as temperatures fell to minus 30C and 20ft snow drifts built up.

The alarm was raised in Chamonix but when rescuers attempted to reach the climbers by air, winds gusting

at 85mph or more pushed their aircraft back.

Finally the weather improved enough for a close approach and a wire was lowered from a helicopter to the mountain ridge and Mr Andrew and his friend's body were flown off.

Mr Andrew, an engineer who works in the North Sea oil industry, said yesterday that he had not expected to survive the ordeal and praised his rescuers. "The rescue services were incredible. They were totally magnificent and it is a miracle that they managed to get me off at all. They managed an incredible job."

"The conditions were unexpected bad. I have never experienced anything as bad for so long. It just didn't stop. There was nothing we could do except wait for help to arrive."

Mr Andrew said he did not know if he would be able to climb again but vowed to remain active whatever happened.

The two men were regarded as two of Scotland's best climbers and had tackled routes previously thought to be unattainable.

Mr Fisher, who has two brothers, was a care worker with the charity Barnardo's in Edinburgh and, like Mr Andrew, was a former president of the University of Edinburgh mountaineering club.

Doctors at Chamonix Hospital, who have dealt with similar cases of serious frostbite,

days before the full extent of his injuries can be assessed.

"It's a very long process," Mr Andrew said. "I am not trying to deceive myself about the extent of my injuries.

"I know they are bad and I know there are still major hurdles to overcome.

"I've got an awful lot of treatment to undergo. I've got very severe frostbite in all four of my

limbs and I am still fairly numb. I am not in much pain but I can tell it is going to be a very long process. I can't say I am making a recovery apart from the fact that I have thawed out."

Many men got children to support them by reminding them what they could be doing if they were not shopping, and male partners also made observations that undermined women's confidence when asked for advice, the study said.

The same women said that when their partners offered constructive advice and support they spent as much as 25 per cent more than they intended.

Women's tactics for curtailing a tour of men's shops were far more subtle and emotional. The men told how their partners would complain of tiredness, aching feet and just "not being well" or pretend they were worried about the children or where the car was parked.

The plaintive cry of "Does my bum look big in this?" before complaining about the answer also drove men mad, researchers found. Men also hated having to look at everything in the shop and women disappearing after reaching the head of the queue to look at something else. But men agreed that if their partners were more supportive they would spend more.

The author David Peek said: "A typical successful strategy was initiated years ago when it was realised that children are serious shopping saboteurs. Retailers introduced play areas, creches and other facilities.

"But now I believe is the time to introduce play areas for grown-ups - imaginative places where the disaffected partner can be parked happily while shopping goes on."

Jamie Andrew with his girlfriend, Anna Wyatt, and father, Howard, at the hospital in Chamonix Gordon Jack

Now it's the technically modified Teletubby

By CHARLES ARTHUR
Technology Editor

KIDS IN future will probably have a diet consisting of chips with everything - in their sys. that is. Playthings are undergoing a revolution. Tomorrow's adults are already getting used to an idea that their parents find strange - of inanimate objects which respond to them, based on the computer chips inside them.

A massive toy fair in New York which begins this weekend will see the unveiling of Teletubbies with built-in processors. When a child squeezes them, they will giggle or say up to 20 different phrases. Meanwhile, screens in their bellies will show games or puzzles.

The new Teletubbies are the result of a joint project between Microsoft, the software

announced that he was heading "To infinity - and beyond".

The most noticeable chip-controlled toy has been Barney, produced by Microsoft's Activities division. The purple dinosaur can be programmed to react to the TV, a computer and even sites on the Internet. But the Teletubbies will be for a newer generation who will almost be surprised if there isn't a chip in their toy.

Yet this will not create a nation of computer maniacs. Psychologists reckon that such toys can be positive for children, because they encourage communication.

"Children do a lot of pretend playing, which is very important in early childhood," said Jennifer Smith, a former psychol-

ogy lecturer at Middlesex University who specialises in early learning. "Even with a toy that doesn't speak, you'll see a child pretend that their teddy bear is talking back to them, holding imaginary conversations."

With toys which do react to the child, "they take the idea on board very rapidly," Dr Smith said.

"But they also soon realise that there is a limited range of interaction, that some phrase has come up before. Eventually, that toy will go to the place where all the others do."

The pressure to go electronic is also affecting traditional toys. Lego, the Danish company best known for its toy bricks, announced last month that it was cutting a tenth of its 10,000 workforce worldwide, as

the huge growth in computer games has put pressure on sales of plastic bricks that don't do anything on their own. To today's child, that can seem a tad dull.

To counter that, the company last summer launched its Mindstorms "programmable bricks" aimed at children aged over 12. Designed with the help of professors at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the bricks could be programmed from a computer.

Lego intends to follow that up with programmable bricks that do not need a computer: they will store their own list of activities. "I think we will see chips built in to more and more toys," said a spokesman for Lego UK.

The original version of the Teletubbies toys

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THE INDEPENDENT
Saturday 6 February 1999

HOME NEWS/9

Madchester flares up again as Mondays hit the road

BY PAUL MCCANN
AND RHYW WILLIAMS

SIX YEARS after they packed up their baggy flares in a whirl of street drugs and recriminations, the Happy Mondays are back. The Hacienda may be closed and the quality of ecstasy diminished, but the fast turnaround of musical trends means the band is reforming to cash in on "Madchester" nostalgia just six years after it split up.

The Mondays, with the Stone Roses and the Hacienda nightclub, were the epicentre of the Madchester or "baggy" scene. A fusion of ecstasy, Acid House beats, rock music and some of the worst haircuts seen in Britain since the Plantagenets, the Madchester phenomenon peaked between 1988 and 1992. It even made the cover of *Time* magazine.

Then, like all youth trends, it was quickly gone, leaving behind some great music, a bastard child called "Britpop" and some very frazzled brain cells.

Infamous lead singer Shaun Ryder has decided to reform the band for financial reasons. The former heroin and crack



STONE ROSES

Their eponymous debut album sold 500,000 copies and they are considered the highlight of the Madchester scene. A second album took five years to record and disappointed. Lead man Ian Brown, recently jailed for "air rage", is now solo. John Squires is in the Stones; bass player Gary "Man" Mounfield left to join Primal Scream.

addict faces a large tax bill and his last band, Black Grape, split acrimoniously in 1997.

The band will play a four-day tour starting in Manchester in April. If the gigs go well, more are planned. The group has yet to decide whether to make a new album: "We'll put

HAPPY MONDAYS

Formed in 1984 in Manchester. In early 1993, Reforming for financial reasons, Shaun Ryder, brothers Simon and Paul, drummer Gaz Whelan, backing vocalist Rowetta and new members Megs - from Simon's last group, Black Grape - and a rapper called Nuts, Mark "Bez" Berry will provide dancing and occasional percussion.

a show on, play some times, and hope it sounds good," said Mr. Ryder yesterday. "Hopefully the tour will be rock and roll. If it turns into rock and Status Quo we'll have to finish it."

Shaun's brother, Paul Ryder, and the drummer, Gaz Whelan, are playing on the tour, and

INSPIRAL CARPETS

Formed in Manchester in 1980. In 1993, frontman Paul Hart was their roadie. The band faded away without a record deal, rather than splitting up in acrimony like others from the scene. They were defined by their Hammond organ sound, so it is not surprising that the organist, Martin Boon, is the only one with a solo career.

backing vocalist, Rowetta, is back. But the guitarist, Mark Day, and the keyboard player, Paul Davis, are no longer in the band. Crucially, Mark "Bez" Berry, the band's non-singing, non-musical mascot, who merely walked around on stage with his hood up, will be joining

CHARLATANS

Formed in Cheshire in late 1989 as a quintet. Number one with first album, *Shame*, with the exception of the keyboard player, Rob Collins, who died in a car crash in 1995. The band had a number-one album as late as 1995, long after the death of the baggy scene. Last year's album produced two hits, "North Country Boy" and "The Only One I Know".

the tour. Shaun Ryder claims Bez asked for £50,000. "We got him down to £500. Well, £500 and a free T-shirt."

The Happy Mondays collapsed in March 1993 when in-fighting, prodigious drug consumption and a chaotic

808 STATE

The band came out of the Madchester scene but was much closer to the pure culture of the "Summer of Love". Techno-rave rock, once described as "Tangerine Dream on speed". Their song "Paradise State" became one of the anthems of 1989. They have survived as remix artists and are still regulars at events such as Tribal Gathering.

Although their existence pre-dates Madchester, their ill-fated single, "Sit Down", complete with flowery T-shirts and baggy trousers - came smack in the middle. After a brief but dangerous flirtation with stadium rock on their *Seven* album, they returned to the roots, teaming up with Blur. End of 1 and Still together, still very successful.

actors to renew old articles of faith and refresh old values.

John McKie, the editor of *Smash Hits*, said: "Blur will greet the reformation of the Mondays with uncontained glee, although the under-20s will probably wonder what all the fuss is about."

"Music pundits need char-

Teachers to boycott appraisal system

THE LARGEST teachers' union yesterday threatened a series of rolling one-day strikes over the proposed "payment by results" and warned that its members would boycott performance appraisals next year.

Doug McAvoy, general secretary of the National Union of Teachers, said the union would take the action to stop annual "Mot" tests for teachers being turned into a way of imposing performance-related pay.

The National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) also threatened a boycott of the annual appraisal, claiming yesterday that it would "swamp schools with bureaucracy".

Mr McAvoy said: "If the Government is determined to ignore the views of teachers, it will antagonise teachers. There could be half-day action, one-day or rolling strikes in the hope that between September this year and September next year the Government will change its position."

Nigel de Gruchy, the general secretary of NASUWT, said the union would negotiate over the changes, but warned: "It is prudent to prepare plans to defend teachers against the totally unmanageable impositions which seem, unfortunately, to be emerging from the Green and technical papers. If that can only be achieved by direct action, then so be it."

Headteachers and employers also attacked the proposals as unworkable, while the other major classroom unions hardened their position.

Peter Smith, general secretary of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, said: "I think that there will be widespread civil disobedience in schools unless the Government listens to the teachers' points of view. The Tower of London is not big enough to contain all the refuseniks."

David Blunkett, the Secre-

BY BEN RUSSELL
Education Correspondent

tary of State for Education, said the Government was proposing a "modern performance system, based on a range of factors including, but not exclusively, targets and results".

Writing in *The Times Educational Supplement*, he said: "Most parents - and teachers - would rightly say that teachers should, can and do make a big difference to the achievement of their pupils."

At stake is the most fundamental reform of the way teachers are assessed and paid for 100 years. Under the proposals, teachers will only progress up the pay scale if they pass an annual appraisal by their head teacher. To pass, teachers must be judged against annual targets, both for their own work and the exam performance of their pupils.

Once teachers get to the top of the classroom pay-scale, currently £23,000, they can apply to take a tougher test to pass a performance and pay "threshold". Headteachers will recommend who should pass, but nationally trained assessors will have the final say.

Teachers who pass stand to gain a 10 per cent pay rise, and access to salaries up to £40,000.

But they will have to sign new contracts giving up restrictions on the length of the working year.

According to the Green Paper, a majority will pass, but a "substantial minority" will not.

Senior government sources said it would be "extraordinary for a teachers' union to suggest to its members that they should oppose arrangements which would enable them to gain a pay increase of around £2,000 a year."

"Effectively, a union which aims to block this appraisal system is telling its members they should settle for lower pay."

Council workers reject 2% rise

LEADERS OF 1.4 million local government workers yesterday rejected a 2 per cent pay offer, branding it "derisory".

Union officials turned down the opening offer from council employers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland in response to a claim for a 5 per cent or £500 increase, whichever was greater. Further talks will be held on 23 February ahead of an April settlement date.

Virginia Branney, deputy head of local government for Unison, the public sector workers' union, said: "This is a disgraceful and derisory offer

which the trade union side has rejected. We urge the employers to think again."

Mick Graham, head of local government for the GMB general workers' union, said: "The offer is completely unacceptable in the light of the pay awards announced earlier this week for other public-sector workers."

A spokesman for the employers said the offer would add £250m to the pay bill, and added that under a previous agreement workers' hours will be cut from 39 to 37 from April.

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The animal liberationist with attitude

MARY FRETWELL seems a very nice woman. At first. She is 58 and has been a career wife and mother for most of her life. She is well-connected. Her husband was Our Man in Paris for some time. She even owns a bassett hound named Claude.

But first impressions can be misleading. This is the woman who has changed the Government's mind about rabies and quarantine. This is the woman who, four years ago, started Passports for Pets, which now boasts 10,000 members.

It does not take long to decide that Lady Fretwell may indeed be nice and even rather fun, but most of all she is formidable. She suggests alternative descriptions for her fight:

"servants" to get in. This puts the basset into a frenzy. "He's loud. He's a rescue. Ignore him," says Lady Fretwell.

Her enemies are not gracious. "Everyone thinks the sun shines out of her backside. All this praising praising!" says Guy Tamplin of the Quarantine Kennels Owners' Association.

"But what is success? She's made herself a massive publicity icon. But she hasn't dealt in the truth."

This would make Lady Fretwell snort. She says that Passports for Pets has to be meticulously accurate in everything it does. At one point she notes how careful she is when people telephone about smuggling pets. "I'm interested in changing the law, not breaking it. We always say that I'm worried about the kennels calling up and recording."

But she is also realistic about her opponents' clout. One of the first things she did was hire a political lobbyist. She has used democracy for all that it is worth. No MP has escaped letters on this subject. Passports for Pets members are relentless constituents. If they do not like the MP's response, they go to his or her surgery.

Lady Fretwell has the obsessiveness of a campaigner who believes her cause is right, both morally and scientifically. Now we are thousands of little midges, annoying everybody all over the place."

Lady Fretwell laughs, as she does all of the time. She is wearing a smart blue suit with a green Passports badge. She is limping because she broke her knee riding "The Army

BY ANN TRENIERAN

lends me a horse," she says, as if this is the most natural thing in the world.

She says one secret of success is never have a committee, and, if you must have one, make sure it does not meet. Passport's office is in the basement of her Wandsworth home, which is a rather grand affair.

I press a bell originally marked

"servants" to get in. This puts

the basset into a frenzy. "He's

loud. He's a rescue. Ignore

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Lady Fretwell laughs, as

she does all of the time. She is

wearing a smart blue suit with a

green Passports badge. She is

limping because she broke

her knee riding "The Army

nel. "They told me not to visit. They do this. They are sneaky buggers! So I didn't. After two months I had a dream. And I never dream. Something said, get up and go. Thank God I did. That dog had given up. Its paws were bleeding and its bark gone. I would go as often as I could and crawl into its cage, sit with it and give it a bone."

The dog survived but she did not forget the experience. In 1984 she heard that a select committee had come out in support of changing the quarantine system. She phoned her friends and told them to write to their MPs. A few said they should meet. They enlisted "a lord, a vet and a bit of money" for the cause. They printed notepaper. They were off.

She thought it would take eight months but the Tory cabinet then quashed the reform. "We had started, so we continued," Lady Fretwell said. She sees this as a battle and says you always have to watch left, right and centre to see what the opposition is doing. She got the vets to form a group - Vets for a Change - and does their paperwork. The RSPCA used to be against changing the system. So when people called Passports for Pets in tears - as many do when faced with the prospect of quarantine - she passed them on to the RSPCA. In the end, the RSPCA had another look at the issue. Now they campaign together.

Politically, Passports seems rather savvy. Last year, for instance, Labour announced it had appointed a committee to look at the quarantine issue. The names were announced at 10pm. Lady Fretwell said there were no experts and, worse, one man on the committee was against change. By 9am the dossier of this man's public pronouncements was in front of the Minister for Agriculture, Nick Brown. That took place, with the RSPCA, last month, with Mr Brown saying he had never

said three years. Lady Fretwell approves of this - and of him. "He's tough."

She doesn't allow herself to be bullied. "They have tried," she said. One vet at the ministry once took her aside and told her to stop all this nonsense. She told him not to get so excited. Nor does she forgive and forget. She crows over the election defeat of one pro-quarantine MP.

She remembers with real anger how one vet at a conference dismissed a question she had asked about guide dogs. "I

thought, that's it, mate! I'll get

you! To do that to the blind! It's disgraceful. Just to protect the quarantine kennels."

Her husband, Sir John, comes into the room. He is retired now and really this is the first time Mary has worked. She takes no pay but certainly puts in the hours. I say that, in some ways, they have changed roles.

Mary: "At my age it is sort of bizarre, isn't it?"

John: "I must say that this

wouldn't have happened without her."

Mary: "For 30 years I went

around as 'spouse of'. Which I

enjoyed. I had a very, very enjoyable life. Then coming back here, I got more and more involved in this. In a sense, you are supporting me now."

John: "I introduce myself as 'spouse of' now."

Mary: "It is extraordinary how one can swap without any difficulty. But it has evolved, hasn't it? John is even getting better at putting things in the dishwasher."

John: "I've even done a Sainsbury's shop."

See what I mean? Nice. But

formidable.

Lady Fretwell (with Claude): Politically savvy, well-organised, persistent and fun. And formidable Tom Pilston

Football disaster legal bill disputed

BY MARK WILKINSON

THE FAMILIES of the people who died in the Hillsborough disaster yesterday called on police chiefs to stop funding the legal costs of two former officers facing private prosecution over the deaths.

South Yorkshire Police Authority initially opted to finance the defence costs of former Chief Superintendent David Duckenfield and former Superintendent Bernard Murray. But the Merseyside-based Hillsborough Families Support Group - which is bringing the private prosecution - has challenged the decision, saying it is illegal.

Sheffield MPs Clive Betts and Helen Jackson have also expressed their concern about the payment of the legal fees amid fears that the final bill could run into millions of pounds.

Critics say that money diverted to defend the officers would otherwise be available for day-to-day policing in South Yorkshire. The police authority met yesterday to discuss the issue.

Both Mr Duckenfield and Mr Murray - the two have retired from the force - are accused of unlawful killing and wilful neglect of public duty. Mr Duckenfield is also accused of intent to pervert the course of justice by lying about the circumstances in which a gate at the ground was opened on the day of the disaster.

As well as the possible expense of a judicial review in the High Court, four weeks have been set aside for a committal hearing at Leeds magistrates' court in April. If the case continues to a lengthy Crown Court trial, the total legal bill could run into millions of pounds.

The Hillsborough Family Support Group, which has set aside £500,000 for its costs, has already asked the district auditor to investigate the legality of the police authority's decision to fund the defence costs.

The disaster happened in April 1989 when 96 Liverpool fans lost their lives at the FA Cup semi-final match against Nottingham Forest.

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I

'If the Kosovo talks don't work, then we'll all join the KLA'

BY RAYMOND WHITAKER
in Lauta, Kosovo

"HE'S SCARED to sit next to me because I'm in the Kosovo Liberation Army," Gani Gecaj, 31, jeers at his brother, Fadil. "He wants peace in Kosovo, but he's scared to sit next to me." Thirty-eight-year-old Fadil shrugs equally: that's Gani for you.

Many families will recognise the relationship - the passionate younger sibling, always bursting to break in when anyone else is talking, and his more philosophical senior, who recognises that allowances must be made.

In Kosovo, however, where ethnic Albanians such as the Gecaj family are struggling to break free of Serbian domination, such differences are a matter of life and death.

The bearded, loud-voiced Gani is in Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) uniform, his rifle across his knees. He boasts of having taken part in the group's first-ever attack on the Serbs, the shooting of a policeman in 1992.

Fadil, clean-shaven and in civilian dress, is a leading member in his district of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), the main Albanian political party, which has consistently advocated a peaceful solution to the conflict in the Serb-ruled province.

The debate between them will be mirrored at the château of Rambouillet, near Paris, where the international community has summoned the Serbs and the Albanians today to reach a settlement.

Fadil supports the LDK line, which is to act as though the Serbs have already given up their rule in Kosovo. The party held a referendum in 1991 that overwhelmingly called for independence and conducted elections, using private homes as polling stations, in which Kosovo's 90 per cent Albanian majority chose Ibrahim Rugova, the LDK leader, as their "president".

But the Serbs did not go away and the KLA emerged from the shadows in 1997 to take a more direct and bloody route to independence. Its attacks provoked a massive Serbian response last year that devastated the province, killing more than 2,000 people and driving hundreds of thousands more from their homes. But they also did more to persuade the rest of the world to intervene than all the LDK's years of patient attempts at negotiation.

"There are two ways to solve this problem," says Fadil. "The KLA chose a short cut, while the LDK took a step-by-step approach which avoids fighting."

"We tried that way for years," Gani cuts in, "but we got nowhere."

"We have the same aim," says his brother, ever the peacemaker: "it is true that the KLA made things go faster."

Both are bleary-eyed - they admit that they were up until 3am, arguing over exactly the same ground.

To reach the Gecaj brothers, you swing off Kosovo's main east-west highway into the Drenica district, the province's poorest and the worst-damaged in last year's Serbian offensive. Passing the town of Srbica ("Little Serbia"), known to the Albanians as Skenderaj, you reach Lauta, or rather the ruins of the village.

Here the Gecaj clan has its compound, which is as devastated as the rest. We meet in a low, newly constructed house, where the freshly plastered walls are still damp. Fadil and Gani have five other brothers - Halli, 43, who is in Albania; Haxhi, 34, who is in the room but says little, taking what is clearly a familiar role of listening to the others; Nebi, 26, who sends money from Germany; and Nehat and Esat, 24 and 22, who have also joined the KLA.

"This family is famous," says the local school head. "They have always fought for the freedom of Albanians."

So oppressive was Serbian rule that Fadil spent 18 months in prison a few years ago for referring to Srbica as Skenderaj in the hearing of a policeman.

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"They beat him until his head looked like this thing

here," says Gani, indicating the battered wood-burning stove, "and he still chooses peace? That's when I thought that I'd rather go and fight."

There is little room for moderation in this conflict, and even Fadil has a pistol strapped to his hip. "People didn't want to fight in places like Prekaz [scene of the first massacre of civilians in Kosovo, late last year] but the war was imposed on them," he says. "That's the only reason I have this."

Gani cannot resist another jibe: "When the shells were falling on Lauta, they didn't distinguish between the LDK and the KLA." But he adds, more seriously: "War was imposed on me too. I could live better than this: we have a family import-export business as well as the farming. I could take my wife

and children to Germany: we have residence rights there. But I have chosen to stay and fight."

Both brothers know what they want from the Rambouillet talks - independence, and even Fadil has a pistol strapped to his hip. "People didn't want to fight in places like Prekaz [scene of the first massacre of civilians in Kosovo, late last year] but the war was imposed on them," he says. "That's the only reason I have this."

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Briton to lead Nato troops

BY JOHN DAVISON

BRITISH TROOPS will play a dominant role in the large Nato ground force which allied countries plan to deploy in Kosovo to enforce any peace deal.

From the multinational formation of some 35,000 troops, Britain will contribute about 8,000, equipped with tanks, armoured vehicles and artillery. It is also likely to provide the officer in overall command and most of the command structure.

The whole force will be deployed under Nato's Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC). Its headquarters, in Rheindahlen, Germany, would relocate to Kosovo.

ARRC is commanded by Lieutenant-General Sir Mike Jackson, and about half of the 1,000 headquarters staff are British. It would be supported by a further 2,000 British troops, mainly from 1 Signals Brigade.

Lt-Gen Jackson is a former Parachute Regiment commander and has valuable experience in former Yugoslavia. He commanded the British contingent of the Nato Implementation Force (Ifor) when it was sent to Bosnia in 1995.

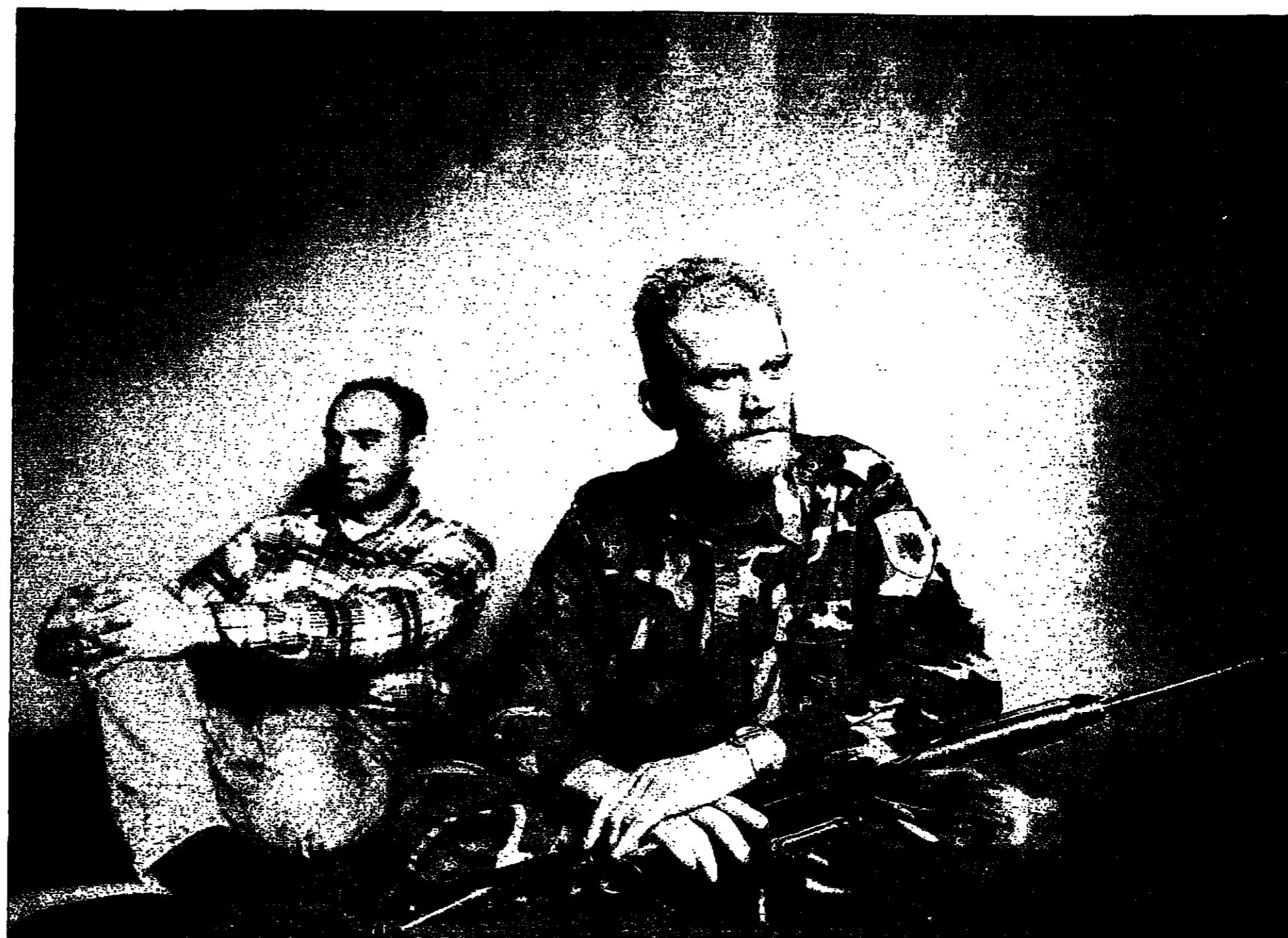
The remaining British contribution will be built around the 4 Armoured Brigade, based at Osnabrück in Germany, together with artillery, engineers and logistic support. All have been placed on 72 hours' notice to move.

Plans provide for the bulk of troops to start arriving in Kosovo about 10 days after a deal is signed. The Serb delegation to the Rambouillet talks, however, has said it would oppose any Nato ground troops being stationed on its soil.

If the force does go, the first British soldiers into Kosovo are likely to be from the King's Own Royal Border Regiment, which already has a reinforced armoured infantry company with Warrior fighting vehicles near Skopje in Macedonia.

They are part of the 2,300-strong extraction force, under French command, there to facilitate the emergency evacuation of unarmed monitors now in Kosovo on behalf of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

Units from 4 Armoured Brigade placed on standby are: the King's Royal Hussars, equipped with Challenger main battle tanks and Scimitar reconnaissance light tanks; an armoured battalion of the Irish Guards; and a company of the Green Howards, both also with Warriors.



Philosophical Fadil (left) and passionate Gani Gecaj at home in Lauta, where the Kosovo Albanians explain their differences and fundamental solidarity David Rose

NP is seeking divorce from UK

The last chance to avoid all-out war

BY RUPERT CORNWELL

THE KOSOVO peace conference due to start in Rambouillet today is probably the last chance to avoid a war in the Serbian province, which Western leaders fear could spread across the southern Balkans.

The talks between senior Serb and Yugoslav officials and political and military leaders of Kosovo's ethnic Albanian community will be chaired by the British Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, and Hubert Vedrine, the French Foreign Minister. The delegates have been given a fortnight to agree a settlement based on a draft plan drawn up by the US envoy Christopher Hill, granting Kosovo wide autonomy for an interim period of three years.

But no member of the six-nation Contact Group of leading powers, which has convened the conference, is under any illusion. "We have a mountain to climb," Mr Cook said yesterday. There is no guarantee of success, and even if a deal is reached, tens of thousands of Nato ground troops will be needed to make it stick.

An early sign of how difficult things could be came as local Serb officials reportedly refused to permit delegations from the Kosovo Liberation Army to enter the airport at Pristina from where they were to leave for the talks. A French government spokesman said Paris was ready to send a military



Rugova: Non-violent path

plane to make sure participants arrived in time.

The conference - very much a test case for Europe's hopes of forging a stronger diplomatic and military identity - will be opened by President Jacques Chirac. Modelled in part on the Dayton talks which brought peace to Bosnia in 1995, the discussions are likely to begin as "proximity" talks, mediated by Mr Hill, before developing into fully fledged negotiations.

Officially, the Serb/Yugoslav delegation will be led by the Serbian Deputy Prime Minister, Ratko Markovic, and his opposite number in the federal Yugoslav government, Nikola Sainovic. Both are trusted aides of President Slobodan Milosevic of Yugoslavia, who, though not present in Rambouillet, will be pulling the strings from Belgrade.

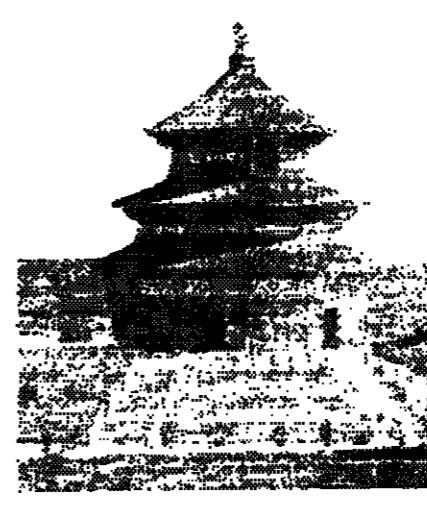
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Mandela bids farewell to parliament

PRESIDENT NELSON Mandela yesterday began the process of bidding farewell as leader of 42 million South Africans with a call for a "new patriotism" to counter the "merchants of cynicism and despair" who are the enemies of reconciliation.

In his opening speech to the final session of parliament in Cape Town before his retirement at the next election, President Mandela conceded some failings of the African National Congress government but underlined that "the foundation has been laid - the building is in progress".

Summing up the five years since he became the first democratically elected president of South Africa, Mr Mandela said: "For a country that was the polecat of the world... the doors of the world have opened, precisely because of our success in achieving things that humanity as a whole holds dear. Of this we should be proud."

Confounding the "merchants of despair", Mr Mandela listed the government's achievements - water in 80 per cent of homes; 63 per cent of households connected to the electricity grid and 1.3 million new telephones.

He said the 700,000 houses built or under construction fell short of the government's target of one million but boasted that old age pensions had been increased by 4 per cent this year and A-level results were improving.

The President - who will be succeeded by his deputy, Thabo Mbeki, after elections in which the ANC is certain to secure a majority - had been expected to announce a poll date between 18 and 27 May.

However, as President Mandela began speaking yesterday, Mr Mbeki handed him a note, presumed to have requested that he excise the possible election dates. The

BY ALEX DUVAL SMITH
in Cape Town

National Party is bringing a high court case against the ANC over alleged irregularities in voter registration. The case could delay the election.

President Mandela conceded that "difficult areas" were crime, corruption and unemployment but omitted xenophobia - a growing concern. He also rounded on critics who focus on the negative aspects of the new South Africa. "We slaughter one another in the stereotypes and mistrust that linger in our

its main message on the Rainbow Nation spirit that he has come to embody. Even though the 60-year-old President wore a dark suit rather than one of the bright shirts he favours, in other respects the setting obliged. There was African dancing outside the parliament building and chuleling as MPs and guests arrived, as if for a fashion show.

Charlie Tambo, the flamboyant television presenter son of the late anti-apartheid militant Oliver Tambo, posed with his white wife, Rachel, who was wearing a bright red traditional Xhosa dress.

One National Party MP, Isak van Zyl, and his daughter Carina, wore 19th-century outfits of the Afrikaner voortrekkers. He said: "I think Afrikaners should wear their traditional outfits just as the Xhosas and Zulus do."

But the Rainbow Nation spirit contrasted sharply with the overwhelmingly humourless mood of the grey-suited opposition benches of the New National Party and the Freedom Front. At one point, President Mandela, in calling for South Africans to "assert our collective identity as Africans" turned to them with an aside: "When I say Africans I mean everybody for whom the continent of Africa is their home." Everyone applauded except the grey suits.

And they did not so much as tap their toes as the president left the chamber, to a standing ovation and the chanting of "Nelson Mandela - hahaha at Swana lewena" - a kind of Sesotho equivalent of "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow".

But then many people believe that the departure of Nelson Mandela means the end of South Africa as a Rainbow Nation - where an entire people can draw inspiration from the mere existence of one man who suffered. Now it will be over to the politicians.

heads and the words of hate we spew from our lips," he said. "We slaughter one another and our country by the manner in which we exaggerate its weaknesses to the wider world."

"The critical act of reconciliation is the dismantling of what remains of apartheid practices and attitudes. Reconciliation, without this major step, will be transient, the edge of false hope on the lips of fools," he said.

President Mandela's 40-minute speech to a packed, multi-coloured parliament - ranging from grey suits on the opposition benches to saris and bright African dresses on the government side - drew for

Female circumcision on trial

A FRENCH court has been trying 27 Malian women this week for the "mutilation of minors" - the circumcision of infant girls, according to their ancient tribal customs. The trial represents a collision of cultures but also, more importantly, a collision of generations.

It is not the first trial of its kind but it may turn out to be the most important and lead to the virtual elimination of the practice in France. For the first time, the prosecution has been brought because one of the victims had the courage to complain to the authorities when she was an adult.

Campaigners against female circumcision have long hoped that the mutilations would dis-

BY JOHN LICHFIELD
in Paris

appear as African immigrant communities became more integrated in French society. French doctors say it is becoming increasingly common for teenage girls of African origin to go to family planning clinics and complain that their boyfriends - often from different ethnic backgrounds - find them "abnormal".

"No one had ever told them that they had been mutilated," said Dr Emmanuelle Petit, who works in a mother-and-child clinic in a Parisian suburb.

Depending on the country of origin, circumcision involves the removal of the clitoris, with-

out anaesthetic, and sometimes the amputation of other parts of the genitalia. Usually the mutilation is performed when the girl is a few weeks old but it is sometimes carried out up to the age of 10.

Fewer and fewer young women of African origin living in France are putting their daughters through the ordeal, Dr Petit said. Where almost 100 per cent of girl babies in African immigrant families were circumcised 15 years ago, "there are hardly any cases today".

Almost all of the cases in the trial in Paris involved mutilations that occurred 10 years ago or more.

Police telephone taps proved, however, that the prin-

cipal accused, Hawa Greou, 52, a professional circumciser, was practising up to her arrest in 1994 and that, contrary to her claims, knew that such mutilations were illegal in France.

She has been in detention awaiting trial for four years, following a complaint by a then 18-year-old Malian woman, Mariatu Koita. Ms Koita, now a 23-year-old law student, appeared in court this week. Since she identified Ms Greou as the woman who circumcised her when she was eight years old, Ms Koita has been ostracised by those on the Home Front.

The 27 accused - all mothers of victims, apart from "Mama" Greou - face up to 15 years each in prison.

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Peter Andrews/Reuters

'Whole Monica' revealed on tape

BY MARY DEJEVSKY
in Washington

AS AMERICANS waited, agog to watch the "whole Monica" - the sight and sound of Monica Lewinsky in synchronisation for the first time - the transcript of her evidence showed her still protective of the President and careful not to incriminate him. The transcript, at times vague, was made public yesterday in accordance with a Senate vote on Thursday to release the sworn evidence that she and the other two witnesses - Vernon Jordan and Sidney Blumenthal - had given to prosecutors earlier in the week.

Answering questions from Ed Bryant, the Republican House prosecutor, Ms Lewinsky upbraided him when he referred to "the first so-called salacious occasion" with the President, saying: "Can you call it something else?... I mean, this is my relationship." "What would you like to call it?" Mr Bryant asked. "It was my first encounter with the President, so I don't really see it as my first salacious... that's not what this was."

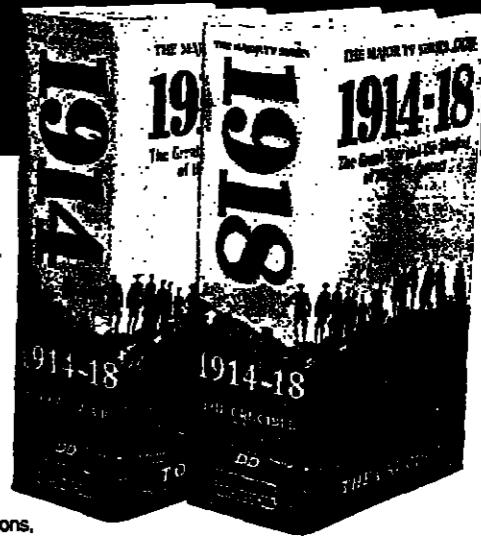
Like the other witnesses, Ms Lewinsky professed memory lapses on some crucial issues, such as whether Mr Clinton had asked her to pass the gifts he had given her to his secretary. "Not that I remember," she said, implicating the President in the concealment of the gifts would help to support the charge that he set out to obstruct justice, as Ms Lewinsky had by then been summoned to testify in the Paula Jones sexual harassment case.

Excerpts from the video recording of Ms Lewinsky's testimony, and that of the other witnesses, will be played to the Senate impeachment trial today. The session will be televised.

Meanwhile, a movement was growing in the Senate to have the final debate on the conviction or acquittal of the President held in public rather than, as the rules stipulate, in closed session. Republican and Democrat Senators have presented a draft motion to open the debate to the media.

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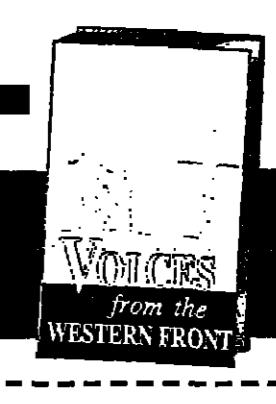
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Bordeaux in crisis as buyers lose their bottle

A DEATHLY quiet has fallen on the great wine estates of Bordeaux. The silence goes beyond the silence of the sleeping vines.

The telephone is NOT ringing. The gravel of the château drive is NOT crunching under the BMW and Audi tyres of the most influential wine brokers and shippers.

After several years of speculative inflation, the bubble in the prices of the finest red wines in the world may be about to burst.

The 1998 vintage – although an excellent year, by all accounts – is being treated with a coolness bordering on glacial frost by the French and foreign wine trade.

Advance bulk sales of last year's top châteaux wines, not yet bottled, are due to begin in about six weeks.

By early February the market would normally be buzzing with gossip and pre-negotiation negotiations. Not this year:

"The telephone is not ringing any more. It's almost got to the point where we have to ask our friends to call," said one château manager.

"There is no market in fine Bordeaux at the moment. What you have is a poker game. Both sides are waiting for the other to blink first," said Nick Faith, a British wine writer and Bordeaux expert.

In the past four years the cost of the best young Bordeaux

BY JOHN LICHFIELD
in Paris

reds – even moderate-to-good labels – has soared out of the reach of all but the wealthiest wine-lovers.

In 1997, which was reckoned an "average" year (ie pretty bad), the château-gate prices of some of the best-known names jumped by 70 per cent.

Some have tripled in price since 1994.

Whatever the price demanded by the producers, the shippers – especially the foreign buyers – continued to buy every bottle on offer, defying the laws of economics (and, perhaps, of common sense). All that may be about to change.

Lower-quality – £4 to £5 a bottle – Bordeaux is little affected. It operates in a different market, with peaks and troughs of its own.

Higher-quality Bordeaux of a drinkable age – say seven years old or more – is subject to the laws of the international wine market. Its price is already tending to sink (though not collapse) because of the Asian recession.

All eyes in the international wine trade are now turned towards the producer-fixed price of the best young clarets, still years away from drinkable age. Until the mid-1990s the second-rank but high-quality labels might have sold off the estate at about £10 to £15 a bottle. Last



Bordeaux by the barrel, but now, after years of speculative inflation, the makers of the finest red wines in the world are facing more uncertain times

David Rose

year they sold at £30 to £40 a bottle (beyond the means of all but the most devoted, cellar-owning claret-lover).

The problem can be summed up in one word: greed. Retail prices for mature, drinkable Bordeaux – and especially for the most sought-after vintages, such as 1982 – were driven up in the 1990s by a boom in Asian demand and a fashion for claret in America, fuelled by the wine guru Robert Parker.

Even relatively young wines, three or four years old, were being sold at four times – in the case of Pétrus 1994, 10 times – what the château had originally charged.

Some time in the mid-1990s the château owners – now as likely to be a multinational company as a local family – gazed at these inflated retail

prices and the profits made by the shippers and traders and asked: "Why not us? We make the stuff, after all."

They ramped up the asking price for young Bordeaux (primeur) and, having got away with it one year, did it again the next and the next.

There is, nominally, a "market" in the young, unbottled *cru classé* – claret of superior quality.

In reality, the trend of prices is fixed by the leading estates, by processes which are difficult to define, based on a) quality and b) what the producers think they can get away with. If anyone tries to defy the trend, their life, in the words of one shipper, is "made very unpleasant for them".

Jasper Morris, managing director of Morris and Verdin, a specialist British wine importer, said: "Going around the estates last year, everyone would say 'It's not a good year. I know these prices are too high but my neighbours over there in the next château insist on putting up the prices'. You would go to the next château and get the same message. It was always the fault of the other châteaux."

For a few years a number of factors sustained the price bubble in young Bordeaux.

There were good vintages in 1993, 1994, 1995 and 1996. There

was good demand from "traditional" customers in Europe and the US.

There was feverish demand

from "new" customers in Asia (mostly Japan and South Korea).

There was also speculative buying by City traders, hoping

to cash in on the increasing price of the maturing wine.

Last year all the markets fell flat at once.

Cases and cases of the 1997 récolte (vintage) of high-class clarets remain unsold in wine traders' cellars all over the world. One British shipper explained: "The 1997 vintage sold easily from the château on to the Bordeaux wine market. It sold with some difficulty to the shippers, who knew it was a poor year. In the end, most people in the business reluctantly went with the flow. A big mistake. It hardly sold to their customers at all."

While these stocks remain on their hands – over 50 per cent in some cases – shippers are reluctant to pay a high price for the 1998 vintage, however good it might turn out to be.

Many growers accept that the prices should come down but they are reluctant to make the first move. It is a late-20th-century reworking of the dilemma of the marriage feast at Canaan. How can you agree to sell a good vintage for less than a bad one? Besides, the producers argue, if the 1998 wine goes cheap, there will never be any reason to buy the 1997. Result: deadlock.

One leading Bordeaux wine broker said: "The market is paralysed, immobile. It is clear – and we've been begging the producers to understand this – that the 1998 prices must come down, however good the vintage is."

"Everything we hear suggests that the wine is either good or very good. No matter. The estates have to swallow

their pride to get the market moving again. I believe we need a fall of 30 to 40 per cent – more for the really expensive wines and less for the moderate ones."

The danger is that, while prices remain high, Bordeaux may lose part of its traditional markets in Europe and the US – and even its new market in Asia – to the New World producers now turning out wines of great quality in the claret style.

The Bordeaux broker said: "We are playing with fire. OK, Bordeaux will always be Bordeaux. We are not going to lose our reputation and markets overnight. But enough is enough. The prices were pushed to absurd and unjustifiable levels last year. There must be a correction this time."

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Nightmare of Masai Mara comes to end

A WEEK IN THE LIFE
JOHN WARD, NAIROBI

JOHN WARD hates the night flight from Gatwick to Nairobi. He says airlines get away with "dreadful service" because for most people the flight is a once-in-a-lifetime experience to a dream game park destination. Not for him; he has flown to Kenya more times than he can remember over the last 11 years - sometimes two or three times in a month - to doggedly pursue an investigation into the so-far unsolved murder of his daughter, Julie, in Kenya's Masai Mara national park.

"Bloody night flights. I hate arriving in cold, murky Gatwick at 4am then driving three hours home to Suffolk. I hate arriving in Nairobi, finding your baggage is lost... then it's into a taxi and straight to the lawyers office," said John Ward.

Sometimes, he does go on to the game park - but not for a once-in-a-lifetime safari. The Masai Mara is his private nightmare, where his 38-year-old daughter was murdered and dismembered, and her remains hidden. It has been his determination alone that has brought two men to trial this month, after years of battling with police cover-ups, reluctant officials, obstructive politics and the inefficiency of a corrupt justice system.

ON THURSDAY, the trial is due to begin. False starts have been typical of the process and provoke little more than an ironic raised eyebrow from Mr Ward, although he is sure to get up at seven in the morning to be ready in court at 9.30am. He has



Julie Ward: Killed in the Masai Mara 11 years ago

his standard coffee and toast, then waits for "Big John", the Mercedes-driving taxi men who is his regular driver. "Maybe I'll buy a car for the trial," he says. "I spend so much on taxi fares in this country."

First, they drive to the office of the lawyer, Salim Dhamji, where Mr Ward works together with police detectives and the prosecution team on bundles of documents. Together they discuss the case and prosecution tactics. Mr Ward says this is a good "refresher" for him as a witness - "I will be the major story-teller in this case, because others go in and out, look at parts of it, but I am the thread that runs through from beginning to end."

TRUE TO form, the judge arrives in the tiny, packed courtroom well after 9.30 - then there is a flurry of activity from photographers and television cameras around the accused,

Simon Makallah, and around John Ward. Sometimes the latter finds the media attention a bit much, although he is meticulously polite and facilitating. Of the scramble in the courtroom, he says it is like "throwing bread in a pond of fish".

When he sits in court, his demeanour changes. A large man, shrewd and decisive, normally with an appealing friendliness and bluff sense of humour, he seems to shrink in the pew-like seats. Dressed formally in a black suit and carrying a briefcase, he no longer looks like a working member of the team, but, with a strangely distant, strained appearance, a grieving father. The case is adjourned until 26 February, to give the court time to join the cases of the two men now accused of the murder.

MR WARD is dropped back at the apartment he has rented for the trial. He calls it shabby - "I don't like it" - but he did not have much choice in getting a short-let, furnished apartment in down-town Nairobi.

Two detectives are due shortly, so he makes tea and sandwiches and gets cold soft drinks out of the fridge. He says he likes the police team, and the lawyer, and considers many of them real friends.

As a multi-millionaire hotelier, he is as at home entertaining in his own kitchen as he is being served like a celebrity. When the detectives leave Mr Ward's "office" at around 5.30pm - documents spread on the coffee table where the lap-



Julie's father, John Ward, in the courtroom in Nairobi on Thursday

Reuters

top is a token concession to technology - he "clears up the bloody dishes" and says he wonders sometimes what his life has come to.

ON FRIDAY morning, Mr Ward has an uncharacteristically late breakfast. "I tossed and turned until about four in the morning," he says. The trial was on his mind, and a meeting he has next week with

his shareholders in London. He shows no desire to talk about seeing the accused. But then he sharply interrupts to say Makallah's attitude has changed in court. "I think he knows this is it," he says.

He has another day of legal work ahead of him, but hopes "we" will be able to have a day off at lake-side Naivasha on Sunday. It turns out to be a solitary plan. "I tend to say we even when I mean me," he says.

Mr Ward still hopes his wife, Jan, will join him during the trial, but is not sure. "She's working on other things, like exhibitions of Muff's (the family nickname for Julie) wildlife photos in London," he says.

Much as he wants her to come, he is pragmatic about his wife's involvement elsewhere. It's a "good thing", he says, she has found something else in life, other than the trial.

LUCY HANNAN

Child rapist is executed in B-movie style

BY STEPHEN VINES
in Manila

sincers," he said, "and that he was innocent."

Echegaray was accused of raping the then 10-year-old girl five times.

According to a prison official his last words were: "Baby, forgive me."

If this sounds like a track from a corny Hollywood film script it may be because the whole execution was surrounded in the morbid atmosphere of a B-movie plot.

Film-makers in the Philippines are busy putting together the story in a typically lurid fashion. On the eve of the execution, a local radio station aired a cassette recorded by his wife on her final visit, in which Echegaray spoke of his love for her and his dreams of their future life together.

Inside the prison, reporters were admitted to see the condemned man make his half-mile shuffle from his cell to the execution room.

Outside the jail where the execution took place, rival prayer vigils and demonstrations were held by pro- and anti-death penalty activists.

Echegaray's wife went up to the prison fence to have her picture taken with a pink rose in her hand. Around the nation church bells were rung at 3pm by order of the Catholic church, which has led the anti-death penalty crusade.

"This is a sad day," said Oscar Cruz, president of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines. "Life is taken away - not by accident, not by sickness, not even by a criminal, but by no less than the state."

A rather different view came from the presidential palace, where the President's men were busy churning out statements about how their leader had stood firm and was waiting for the other 914 inmates on death row to be dealt with.

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18/MANAGED FUNDS' PERFORMANCE

Business & City Editor, Jeremy Warner
News desk: 0171-293 2636 Fax: 0171-293 2098
E-mail: IndyBusiness@Independent.co.uk

BUSINESS

BRIEFING

Hamley's shareholders play tough

INSTITUTIONAL shareholder pressure is understood to be mounting for changes on the board of Hamley's, the underperforming toy retailer. Leading investors are said to be unhappy about declining profits at the group and may push for a new chief executive to replace Chris Ash. His position appears to have been undermined by the return of Stephen Woodbridge as executive deputy chairman, although he is supposedly only working on short-term projects.

Hamley's profits are forecast to fall from last year's £7.5m to £5m this year after a series of operational problems that have compounded the impact of weak consumer spending and falling tourist numbers at its flagship Regent Street store. Hamley's biggest shareholders are M&G, Jupiter and Phillips & Drew.

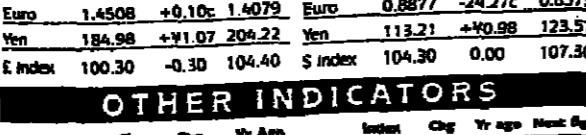
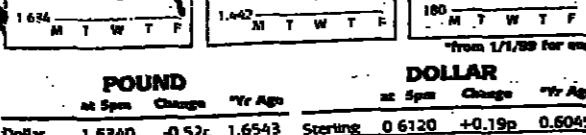
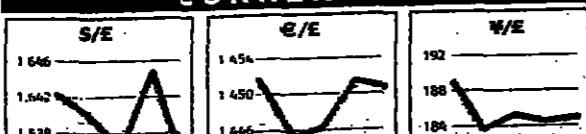
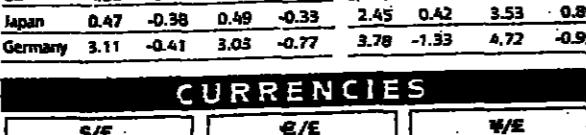
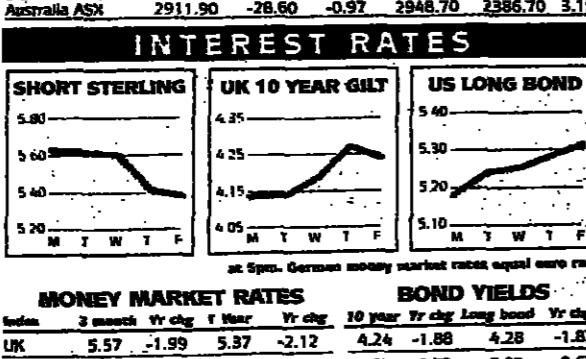
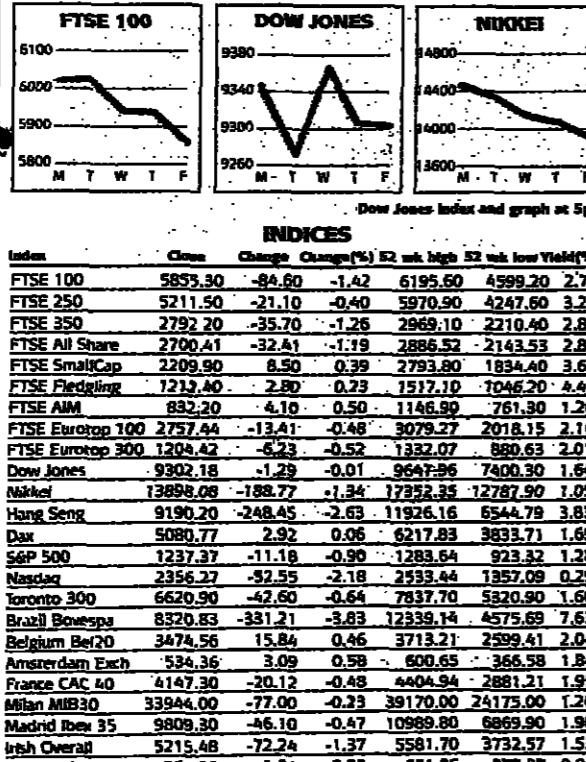
Dimon seeks \$42.5m share sale

JAMIE DIMON (left), the former president of Citigroup, yesterday applied to sell 800,000 shares, worth about \$42.5m (£26m), in the company he abruptly left in November. Mr Dison, 42, stunned Wall Street when he left the world's largest financial company at the request of his boss and former mentor, the co-chairman Sanford Weil. Mr Dison's departure, a month after Citigroup's merger with Travelers Group, followed a \$1.33bn trading loss at the investment banking unit he led with Deryck Maughan.

Weir rejects £600m cash offer

WEIR GROUP, the Glasgow-based pump maker, yesterday rejected a £600m cash offer from Flowserve of the US, whose offer was worth 300p per Weir share. Flowserve is smaller than Weir and could not afford the extra debt to mount a realistic offer. Weir, profitable and cash-rich, is expected to resist any offer under 350p. The shares fell 26p to 31p.

STOCK MARKETS



Rates for indication purposes only

Source: Thomas Cook

Surprise profit warning sends MDIS skidding

BY ANDREW GARFIELD
Financial Editor

MDIS - the former McDonnell Information Systems - threatened yesterday to return to its former accident-prone form after a surprise profits warning sent its shares sliding 12 per cent before they recovered to close 3.5p lower at 42p.

The software group, which has returned to both profitability and the dividend list under the former IBM executive John Klein, blamed unexpected losses at Glovia, its

of £2m against last-year accounts.

Following yesterday's statement, Collins Stewart, the house broker, cut its profits forecast before tax and exceptional from £7m to £2.7m, although windfall gains from a settlement with the Inland Revenue could take that up to £1m in headline terms.

The group is also planning to make up the shortfall by

recognising £1m of the exceptional gain from the joint venture with Fujitsu announced in June 1997.

The MDIS board said that the public and corporate sectors, and human resources systems, both problem areas in the past, had increased their order intake by 25 per cent.

Similar problems, which are a result of the collapse in Asian markets, have also hit Glovia's larger rivals such as SAP and

Baan, both of which have experienced a dramatic fall from grace over recent months.

John Morely at Collins Stewart said that the shortfall was disappointing, but he insisted that there were good reasons to believe this was a temporary setback. The 40 per cent growth in revenue at Glovia

contrasts favourably with the 15 per cent rise SAP the market leader, could muster in the current climate, he said.

"It is not too bad a message. This company has come from huge losses to profit and back on to the dividend list. They are doing a good job. I wish there were not this shortfall this year, but the positives are good," he said.

MDIS has yet to live down the poor reputation it gained in the City when it plunged from a high of 224p shortly after flotation in 1994 after a series of profits warnings.

Float values GM's Delphi at \$9.6bn

BY MICHAEL HARRISON

Vauxhall's two UK car plants at Ellesmere Port and Luton.

Delphi's chief executive, J T Battenberg III, said the main purpose of floating the company as an independent business was to pick up more sales from vehicle manufacturers other than GM. Historically, rival car makers have been reluctant to buy from a business which is 100 per cent owned by GM, the world's leading car maker.

The initial public offering of 100 million shares, representing 17.7 per cent of Delphi, was priced at \$17 a share. The offer was three-and-a-half times subscribed, with institutions applying for 310 million shares and retail investors 150 million shares.

Delphi

which supplies a full range of components to GM factories throughout the world, had sales of \$28.4bn last year, ranking it among the top 30 US companies in the Fortune 500. Based in Troy, Michigan, the company has 200,000 employees and operates from 169 sites and a further 40 joint ventures in 36 countries.

In the UK, Delphi employs 1,250 people at six sites - Coventry, Ellesmere Port, Luton and Basinskoate. It supplies components ranging from engine parts and instrument clusters to steering columns and electronic systems to

Delphi's chief executive, J T Battenberg III, said the main purpose of floating the company as an independent business was to pick up more sales from vehicle manufacturers other than GM. Historically, rival car makers have been reluctant to buy from a business which is 100 per cent owned by GM, the world's leading car maker.

For the same reason Ford is also planning a stock market listing and demerger of its in-house automotive components business, Visteon.

Mr Battenberg also said that the flotation would give Delphi greater commercial freedom and mean that it no longer had to compete with other parts of GM for resources to expand and update its facilities.

Paul Fleming, Delphi's UK director, said the company was already much more than an original equipment manufacturer. It also planned to expand its operations to take advantage of the number of car makers that had set up in Britain to take advantage of the European market.

Delphi has already helped Land Rover to produce a new system that enhances the cornering of its models.

Sainsbury shares hit 12-month low

BY NIGEL COPE
Associate City Editor

SAINSBURY'S disappointed the stock market yet again yesterday when it revealed a poor sales performance over Christmas and admitted that its high-profile "Value to Shout About" advertising campaign starring John Cleese had failed to meet expectations.

Sainsbury's shares plunged by more than 8 per cent to a 12-month low of 389p as the supermarket group said underlying sales in the 19 weeks to 30 January were up by just 1.2 per cent on the same period last year. This compares to a figure of 4.1 per cent announced by Tesco last month, indicating that Sainsbury's is continuing to lose ground to the market leader.

Sainsbury's chief executive, Dino Adriano, said that although the Cleese campaign had succeeded in attracting more customers to the stores, it had not encouraged them to spend more. Instead they had

anois ill. "Our strategy remains unchanged, and Dino looked perfectly well last time I saw him," a spokesman said.

Analysts criticised the company, saying its management team had moved too slowly to act on prices and was still being outmanoeuvred by rivals such as Tesco, Asda and a recovering Safeway, whose trading update is due on Monday. "This business seems no closer to solving the problem of how to grow sales in an environment of falling margins than it was five years ago," said Andrew Fowler, food retail analyst at Morgan Stanley.

Market share figures compiled by AGB show that in December Sainsbury's share of the UK grocery market was 16.1 per cent, compared to 20.2 per cent held by Tesco. Two years ago Sainsbury's was much closer, with 17.1 per cent compared to Tesco's share of 19.3 per cent.

Sainsbury's has been caught out in an ever more price-competitive supermarket environment, as is illustrated by the current price war on bread, with some supermarkets cutting the cost of a sliced white loaf to just 7p.

Its trading statement showed that underlying sales at Savacentre were up by just 0.4 per cent. Homebase, the DIY chain, did better with a 4.3 per cent rise.

Analysts have cut their current-year profit forecasts to around £750m. Some sector watchers suggest there are parallels between the plight of Sainsbury's and that of Marks & Spencer, another dimming high-street star. They said Sainsbury's was now paying the price for an "arrogant inward-looking attitude" that was proving difficult to shake off.

"Sainsbury's just does not have a culture that learns quickly," one analyst said.

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Its trading statement showed that underlying sales at Savacentre were up by just 0.4 per cent. Homebase, the DIY chain, did better with a 4.3 per cent rise.

The news came as TRW was preparing to post its offer document to Lucas shareholders this weekend. In a briefing with US investors, the chief executive Dick Snell said that it was "unlikely" that the company would mount an all-cash assault on Lucas.

During the briefing, Mr Snell said that if Federal-Mogul wins the bid war it would quickly sell Lucas to its US investors.

Many UK institutions, which account for about 45 per cent of Lucas shareholders, are not allowed to own US shares and are set to vote down any cash-and-paper offer.

The news came as TRW was preparing to post its offer document to Lucas shareholders this weekend. In a briefing with US investors, the chief executive Dick Snell said that it was "unlikely" that the company would mount an all-cash assault on Lucas.

Industry analysts had been predicting that Mr Snell would find it difficult to summon the financial resources for an all-cash offer due to Federal-Mogul's overstretched balance sheet.

Mr Snell's statement is a blow for Lucas UK shareholders who are unwilling to hold

Slowdown leads to insolvency rise

BY LEA PATERSON

CORPORATE insolvencies have hit a three-year high, new figures revealed, with more expected in the coming months as the economy continues to slow.

According to the Department of Trade and Industry, there were 3,346 company insolvencies in the final quarter of 1998. This is 6.5 per cent higher than the same period in 1997, and the largest quarterly total since early 1996.

Insolvency experts warned that yesterday's jump in the figures was just the tip of the iceberg. Economists regard

and 18,800 in 2000. If UK economic growth turns out to be lower than expected, the picture could be far worse - the PwC model assumes that the UK avoids outright recession.

Steve Hill, an insolvency expert at the accountancy firm PricewaterhouseCoopers, predicted that insolvencies could surge by as much as 40 per cent over the next two years.

According to the PwC economic model, corporate insolvencies will rise from a total of 13,203 in 1998 to 16,000 in 1999

and 18,800 in 2000. If UK economic growth turns out to be lower than expected, the picture could be far worse - the PwC model assumes that the UK avoids outright recession.

Mr Hill said: "Although average levels are certainly lower than in 1990, the most vulnerable sectors include construction, hotels, restaurants, engineering and transport. It is a very difficult time for many companies."

A separate study yesterday found that the slowing economy was continuing to

undermine employment prospects. Latest figures from NTC Research revealed falls in demand for both permanent and temporary staff.

The NTC figures - produced on behalf of the Federation of Recruitment and Employment Services - pointed to a further easing of pay pressures.

The survey showed that the rate of growth of pay for both permanent and temporary staff slowed to the weakest seen in the 16-month history of the survey. Skill shortages are also starting to ease, NTC said.

AROUND THE WORLD'S MARKETS

LONDON

FOOTsie fell 8.6 points to 5,855.3 on worries about US interest rates. Mid cap shares, in rampant form for much of this year, retreated and it was left to the small cap index to produce a gain. Once again trading was busy with volume topping 1 billion shares. J Sainsbury, the supermarket chain, was the poorest performing blue chip, falling 36p to a 12-month low of 389p. Other supermarket shares were unsettled and the broad price war lowered Associated British Foods 26p to 520p.

Rates for indication purposes only

Source: Bloomberg

NEW YORK

SHOULD again opened lower, led by further falls in hi-tech stocks. The rise of 245,000 in January non-farm payroll numbers was well above expectations, encouraging fears of a rise in interest rates.

Near midday the Dow Jones average was 11.84 lower at 3,292.61 and Nasdaq was down 48.33 - 2 per cent - at 2,381.74. Microsoft was down \$3.875 and Intel down 53 at \$127.125. IBM, General Motors and Xerox were among fallers.

TOKYO

RENEWED strength in the yen combined with the overnight fall on Wall Street to send Tokyo shares lower. The Nikkei 225 index closed down 18.87 at 13,698.25, still comfortably above the day's low of 13,769.25 and the technical support level of 13,800.

Car and steel makers, telecoms and banks were mixed, but hi-tech shares were lower in sympathy with the fall on the Nasdaq index, with Hitachi down by another 23 yen at 745 yen, and Toshiba down 18 yen at 724 yen.

HONG KONG

HONG KONG suffered most of the Asia-Pacific markets hit by overnight falls on Wall Street and Nasdaq. By the close the Hang Seng was down 248.45, or 2

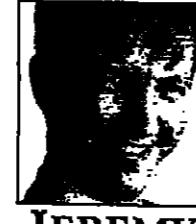
MAIN MOVERS																			
RISES								FALLS											
Price	Chg	Tm	P/E	Code	High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Tm	P/E	Code	High	Low	Stock				
Alcoholic Beverages	1,605.00	-	-	-	107	Heublein Co	300	65	18	160	279	-	-	52	50	Monsanto Co	84 +0.1476	-	-255
Aluminum	1,725.00	+0.35	53	175	1900	100	100	100	80	83	93	4703	114	121	121	Siemens	93 +0.10	-	-330
Am. Biscuit Pr.	284.00	+0.00	66	146	1138	100	100	100	80	82	88	758	105	15	224	Six Flags	75 +0.15	-	-325
Am. Can Co.	141.00	-0.05	-	107	141	43	43	40	40	40	40	707	100	50	145	Six Flags	45 +0.14	-	-325
Am. Detergent	640.00	+0.15	35	188	1000	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	Siemens	124 +0.15	-	-325
Am. Metal Car.	24.00	+0.00	46	116	159	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	Six Flags	124 +0.15	-	-325
Am. Metal Car.	24.00	+0.00	47	116	159	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	Six Flags	124 +0.15	-	-325
Am. Metal Car.	24.00	+0.00	48	116	159	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	Six Flags	124 +0.15	-	-325
Am. Metal Car.	24.00	+0.00	49	116	159	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	Six Flags	124 +0.15	-	-325
Am. Metal Car.	24.00	+0.00	50	116	159	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	Six Flags	124 +0.15	-	-325
Am. Metal Car.	24.00	+0.00	51	116	159	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	Six Flags	124 +0.15	-	-325
Am. Metal Car.	24.00	+0.00	52	116	159	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	Six Flags	124 +0.15	-	-325
Am. Metal Car.	24.00	+0.00	53	116	159	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	Six Flags	124 +0.15	-	-325
Am. Metal Car.	24.00	+0.00	54	116	159	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	Six Flags	124 +0.15	-	-325
Am. Metal Car.	24.00	+0.00	55	116	159	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	Six Flags	124 +0.15	-	-325
Am. Metal Car.	24.00	+0.00	56	116	159	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	Six Flags	124 +0.15	-	-325
Am. Metal Car.	24.00	+0.00	57	116	159	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	Six Flags	124 +0.15	-	-325
Am. Metal Car.	24.00	+0.00	58	116	159	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	Six Flags	124 +0.15	-	-325
Am. Metal Car.	24.00	+0.00	59	116	159	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	Six Flags	124 +0.15	-	-325
Am. Metal Car.	24.00	+0.00	60	116	159	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	Six Flags	124 +0.15	-	-325
Am. Metal Car.	24.00	+0.00	61	116	159	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	Six Flags	124 +0.15	-	-325
Am. Metal Car.	24.00	+0.00	62	116	159	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	Six Flags	124 +0.15	-	-325
Am. Metal Car.	24.00	+0.00	63	116	159	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	Six Flags	124 +0.15	-	-325
Am. Metal Car.	24.00	+0.00	64	116	159	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	Six Flags	124 +0.15	-	-325
Am. Metal Car.	24.00	+0.00	65	116	159	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	Six Flags	124 +0.15	-	-325
Am. Metal Car.	24.00	+0.00	66	116	159	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	Six Flags	124 +0.15	-	-325
Am. Metal Car.	24.00	+0.00	67	116	159	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	Six Flags	124 +0.15	-	-325
Am. Metal Car.	24.00	+0.00	68	116	159	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	Six Flags	124 +0.15	-	-325
Am. Metal Car.	24.00	+0.00	69	116	159	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	Six Flags	124 +0.15	-	-325
Am. Metal Car.	24.00	+0.00	70	116	159	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	Six Flags	124 +0.15	-	-325
Am. Metal Car.	24.00	+0.00	71	116	159	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	Six Flags	124 +0.15	-	-325
Am. Metal Car.	24.00	+0.00	72	116	159	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	Six Flags	124 +0.15	-	-325
Am. Metal Car.	24.00	+0.00	73	116	159	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	Six Flags	124 +0.15	-	-325
Am. Metal Car.	24.00	+0.00	74	116	159	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	Six Flags	124 +0.15	-	-325
Am. Metal Car.	24.00	+0.00	75	116	159	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	Six Flags	124 +0.15	-	-325
Am. Metal Car.	24.00	+0.00	76	116	159	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	Six Flags	124 +0.15	-	-325
Am. Metal Car.	24.00	+0.00	77	116	159	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	Six Flags	124 +0.15	-	-325
Am. Metal Car.	24.00	+0.00	78	116	159	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	Six Flags	124 +0.15	-	-325
Am. Metal Car.	24.00	+0.00	79	116	159	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	Six Flags	124 +0.15	-	-325
Am. Metal Car.	24.00	+0.00	80	116	159	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	Six Flags	124 +0.15	-	-325
Am. Metal Car.	24.00	+0.00	81	116	159	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	Six Flags	124 +0.15	-	-325
Am. Metal Car.	24.00	+0.00	82	116	159	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	Six Flags	124 +0.15	-	-325
Am. Metal Car.	24.00	+0.00	83	116	159	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	124	Six Flags	124 +0.15	-	-325
Am. Metal Car.	24.00	+0.00	84	116	159	1													

Net gain may be only for consumers

MASAYOSHI SON is a South Korean who lives in Japan. Some years ago, he decided that the Internet would be the future and raised \$100m to invest in the World Wide Web. His company, Softbank Corporation of Japan, examined some 5,000 Internet companies, most of them from the US, and eventually invested in 100 of them. His choices, which include a big stake in Yahoo!, have made him seem like one of the most inspired investors of all time.

Today his \$100m is worth in excess of \$15bn and he is at the vanguard of the boom in Internet stocks. Most people think the phenomenon a bubble, which will inevitably burst and deflate. Mr Son believes we are only at the beginning - that the market capitalisation of the Internet sector will continue to rise exponentially over the years ahead as the World Wide Web works its transforming powers on business.

Whose judgement would you rather trust? Those who have utterly failed to forecast the significance of the Net, and now without a single Internet stock in their portfolio, condemn the phenomenon as a dangerous financial bubble, or those who like Mr Son saw it coming and backed their hunches? I'm



JEREMY
WARNER

There is no doubt that the Internet is raising some fascinating investment issues

not even going to attempt to answer this question, because whichever way I jump, I'm highly likely to be wrong. But there is no doubt that the Internet is raising some fascinating investment issues.

Just consider the following. An Internet company called Buy.com in the US is planning shortly to tap the market for \$60m through an initial public offering. The issue is almost bound to be hugely oversubscribed, for Buy.com has a unique selling

proposition. Its business plan envisages a negative margin on everything it sells over the Net - in other words it plans to sell products for less than it buys them for. The difference, it is envisaged, will be made up by advertising revenue. The more hits that Buy.com can generate, the more advertising it will attract and the more it can reduce its prices.

This is such a far out business proposition that it could only really be invented in America.

There is nothing new in the concept of loss leading, of course. The story is possibly apocryphal, but it was reported at the time of the great baked beans price war some years ago that one supermarket actually began to pay shoppers to come through the doors and relieve its shelves of baked beans. A similar form of loss leading is being used by the supermarkets in the present bread price war. On our own turf in the British newspaper industry, *The Times* has been selling below its costs of production for five years now, and jolly annoying it is too.

In all these cases, however, such loss leading predatory pricing, call it what you will, is only possible because it is conducted by large organisations able to cross subsidise

from more conventionally priced products. Buy.com is a business start up and no such subsidy is available. Even so, it might just work. Independent Television in Britain has operated profitably in precisely this manner for many years, paying for the cost of its programmes entirely from advertising revenues.

But just think about the implications of what Buy.com is proposing. It sells products at below cost, which in turn puts a general deflationary pressure on product prices. It hopes to make up the money by persuading the producers of those products to advertise. For conventional producers and distributors, this is plainly extremely bad news indeed. At every level, they lose out.

In such a game, even Internet distributors such as Amazon.com would struggle, because eventually Buy.com and others like it will find a way of selling books and CDs even more cheaply. Far from benefiting business, then, the Internet may be destined profoundly to damage it. Certainly if it is capable of tipping the scales of benefit very significantly away from business and towards the consumer. Logically we'll end up with a situation where the intensity of competition on the Net

will mean nobody is capable of making a profit.

In reality, of course, that extreme of position will never be reached, if only because business has to make profit to survive. All the same, the idea that the World Wide Web presents businesses old and new with unparalleled opportunities may be a bit of a misconception.

Certainly there will be business success stories on the web. It can also safely be said that those businesses that don't fully embrace the net will fail. Furthermore, the web has the potential greatly to increase the volume and speed of trade. But in the end the web is more of a challenge to business than an opportunity.

This applies not just to established producer/distributors, but to the newer generation of wealth creators and internet entrepreneurs too. Electronic commerce has already achieved take off point in the US. In the process, quite a few traditional "on land" retailers have now largely made the switch to "online".

For instance, at Charles Schwab, the discount stock broker, more than 70 per cent of trades are now conducted through the Net. Remarkably, this migration has al-

lowed Schwab greatly to enhance customer service. It is now able to offer personal advice and content in a way never economically possible under the old model.

In Britain, the migration to electronic commerce is likely to be slower. This is not just because personal computer penetration is lower. The telephone costs of using the Net - free in the US, costly in the UK - are proving a big constraint on growth too. Even so, what is happening in the US will presumably eventually sweep the world.

Some forecasters believe that e-commerce will quite quickly grow to be larger than the total size of all commerce as it stands today. If this seems a logical impossibility, it is only because the Net's potential for expanding the volume and speed of trade tends to be ignored. However, even the most conservative forecasts point to phenomenal growth.

Despite this, it is not yet clear where the web's money making capacity lies, if indeed it lies anywhere. For most businesses, the web is just another marketing and distribution channel, albeit a very low cost one.

Nobody has any doubt but that the web is going to transform the way they do business, but they

also worry about how they are ever going to make any money out of it. It may well be that the only true business beneficiaries are the internet wholesalers and gate keepers, those able to offer a mechanism for searching the Web for the lowest possible prices.

Nobody can reasonably object to competition and transparency; but many businessmen are beginning to think there are limits. Unfortunately, the internet doesn't recognise them. Personally, I share the investment perspective of the Web put forward by Bill Gates of Microsoft.

I hope I do him no injustice by paraphrasing it in this manner: The net is playing a wonderful thing which is revolutionising the way business is conducted, and for consumers it is a godsend which for the first time this millennium puts them firmly in the saddle in terms of choice and value. But don't assume there's gold to be had from mining these seams. Disney and Coca Cola are much more likely still to be big companies making good profits 25 years from now than Yahoo! or Amazon.com. And as for established consumer goods producers, the outlook is only for more and more competition and keener and keener pricing.

Holiday sector in demand as Footsie feels the pressure

AS BOOKIE William Hill canters along towards its market flotation, shares of the last big "popular" stock sale came to life as takeover rumours swirled around.

Thomson Travel, Britain's biggest holidays group, has been a major disappointment to its army of small shareholders. The shares briefly flirted with 200p but were down to 105.5 in October and humping along at 138p before they were engulfed in bid excitement. Talk of a German bid lifted them 17.5p to 155.5 - still below the offer price - in frenetic trading.

The Thomson float, accompanied by the perk of cut-price holidays for subscribing shareholders, was marred by complaints of share shop inefficiency.

This week the other leading holiday operators have also been in demand although, until yesterday's burst of activity, Thomson had been left out in the cold.

The holiday sector has been encouraged by favourable comments from Warburg Dillon Read, which has alighted on Thomson and Airtours as its favoured shares.

It could be argued that the sudden strength of holiday shares is related to the modest revival in oversold leisure shares this week. Forward holiday bookings are thought to be running at a heady level.

EXPECT takeover action soon from AIM-listed Pubs'n'Bars. The group is thought to be near to taking over a 34-strong pubs chain with which it is already closely related. Talks are also going on with another pubs company and there are hopes they will be concluded in the next few weeks.

Pubs'n'Bars, with its shares unchanged at 50p, is capitalised at £1.8m.

although capacity has been reduced. This week's base cut should further encourage a summerlike rush to the sun.

Airtours, up 8p to 430.5p, was strong on Thursday as itops returned that its major shareholder, the US Carnival Corporation, was planning a bid. First Choice, the number one holiday group, rose 5.5p to 520p.

Footsie's top player was BTG, up 19p to 360.5p. The showbiz group, continued to score from Warburg Dillon Read support, up a further 18.5p to 450.5p.

WPP, the advertising group, gained 12p to 474p on Goldman Sachs support, and NFC advanced 6p to 147.5p after meeting analysts.

Tate & Lyle, the sweeteners group, improved 20.25p to 450p as BT Alex Brown suggested a 500p target.

Ladbrokes, confirming it is the Stakeholder, fell 8.75p to 230p; Stakies rose 4.5p to 141.5p.

Vaux, the hotel and pub group that is near to selling its two breweries and 350 bottom-of-the-barrel pubs, put on 20.5p to 275p on the theory that it, too,

MARKET REPORT



DEREK
PAIN

£28.5m. Until the share sale it was controlled by the Canadian Thomson family. Now the Canadian interest is down to 20 per cent.

Most other shares were down in the dumps. Footsie, ruffed by fears of higher US interest rates, fell 84.6 points to 5,855.3 in another busy session. Even the in-form mid cap index, strong for much of this year, lost its enthusiasm, falling 21.1 points to 5,211.5. It was left to the small cap shares to lead the bull flag flying, with their index up 8.5 to 2,209.9.

J Sainsbury's disappointing trading statement - and, presumably, the bread war - lowered the shares by 36p to 393p, a 12-month low. Tesco lost 5.75p to 181.75p and Safeway

Flowserve, a US group. The Americans, it seems, were prepared to bid 300p a share; whether they will return to the fray with a hostile offer remains to be seen.

Watts, Blake Beare, the china clay group, firmed 15p to 490p after its major shareholder, the Belgian Sibelco group, produced its signalled offer. Portsmouth & Sunderland Newspapers firmed 25p to 1,725p after Newsquest, unchanged at 301p, indicated bid hopes.

Rebus, the computer group, jumped 22p to 159.5p as other talks were confirmed.

Wyke, a precision engineer, said it had not collected any offers but was reviewing its options. The shares gained 15p to 94p.

BIC, the cables and construction group, remained on the wanted list, gaining 1.5p to 24p on continuing bid speculation. But engineer FKL widely tipped as the next bid target, fell 5.5p to 163.5p in busy trading.

Northern Leisure, the discotheque chain, added 10.5p to 149p as the group continued to benefit from bid talk and the revival in the heavily battered leisure sector.

Profits warnings flowed again. Salt Group, Staveley firmed 9.5p to 71.5p and MDIS, no stranger to providing dire tidings to shareholders, lost 3.5p to 42p after cautioning that re-

SHARING SPOTLIGHT

2900	2800	2700	2600	2500	2400	2300	2200	2100	2000	1900	1800
FTSE SMALL CAP											
2900	2800	2700	2600	2500	2400	2300	2200	2100	2000	1900	1800
FMAM J AS ON DJF											

SHARING IN Rage Software were again busily traded as stories went round that Microsoft may take a 5 per cent stake in the computer games group.

The company recently said it was in talks with Microsoft on distribution of its latest football game, *Rival Striker*. Rage shares firmed 0.5p to 14.75p. Seqq put turnover at 5.4 million. Three years ago the price touched 25p.

Suits would be below expectations.

Gyrus, a medical group, firmed 2p to 175.5p; it raised 21.5m by placing shares at 145p. Future Integrated Technology, unchanged at 21p, raised £15,000, placing shares at 21p. Oxford Molecular hardened 2.5p to 32p as a long time seller was cleared.

Dawson International, gained 5p to 17p - five years ago the shares were 159p - as aggressive investor Guinness Peat arrived with a 5.4 per cent shareholding. Phillips & Drew, the fund manager that has been flexing its investment muscles lately, is already involved in the textile group with a 21.7 per cent stake.

Fitznes First, the health club chain planning to move from AIM to a full listing next week, jumped 26p to 395.5p.

SEAG VOLUME: 1.08 billion SEAG TRADES: 75,753 GILTS INDEX: 115.86 +0.08



Stephen Grabiner, ONdigital's chief executive: The pay-TV venture could be worth up to £1bn on flotation

Granada seeks early float to fix market value of ONdigital

BY PETER THAL LARSEN

from 2250m to as much as 2500m.

ONdigital, which launched its 30-channel service in November, has been battling with British Sky Broadcasting, the satellite television group, in the race to sign up subscribers to digital television.

Details of ONdigital's performance is a close secret, but its shareholders expect it to have signed up 350,000 subscribers by the end of the year.

BSkyB will next week update the City on the performance of its digital service when it issues half-year results. However, ONdigital is thought unlikely to issue an update before May.

Charles Allen, Granada's chief executive, is understood to be interested in floating the minimum 20 per cent stake allowed by Stock Exchange rules.

Shareholders may also want to capitalise on the soaring valuations attached to hi-tech stocks by seeking a dual listing on Nasdaq, the US exchange.

Carlton and Granada have budgeted a total investment of 275m for ONdigital over the next five years. The venture will break even when it has two million subscribers.

The flotation of ONdigital has been under consideration for some time. Last year Morgan Stanley, the investment bank, was retained to examine the possibility of a float. However, ONdigital is not currently thought to have retained any financial advisors.

If Carlton and Granada decide against an early float, they are likely to wait until 2003 when the business has been up and running for five years.

Meanwhile, Granada yesterday indicated that ITV had increased its share of television advertising revenue since the beginning of the year. Steve Morrison, chief executive of Granada's media division, said ITV's advertising revenues in January grew by 11 per cent on the same month last year. In 1998 ITV's advertising revenues grew by a total of 4.8 per cent.

week that it would press on with its bid for P&S despite the failure of its tender offer for 10 per cent of the group. Johnston already holds 14.99 per cent.

Charles Villiers, who built up the local newspaper interests of Scottish Radio Holdings, has confirmed he is putting together a bid for the entire group.

P&S said: "We welcome all interest. We do not have anything such as a favoured bidder. There are certainly others out there."

BY ANDREW GARFIELD
Financial Editor

ollowing and Mergers Committee. Following that decision, Newsquest has asked the Department of Trade and Industry for a similar reference that would allow a Newsquest bid for the group to be considered at the same time.

Newsquest last night issued a statement confirming its intent after the competition minister, Kim Howells, decided to refer Johnston's proposed acquisition of P&S to the Monopolies Commission.

Sources close to Newsquest

THE GROWTH of electronic commerce and Internet use by business and industry has fuelled a profits bonanza at ECsoft, a fledgling computer consultancy group floated on the stock market only last year.

Full-year profits more than doubled to £2.1m and the workforce has mushroomed from 101 in 1997 to almost 800. The company says: "In the course of

the year we experienced an increasing trend towards electronic commerce, with Internet access becoming prerequisite for many customer projects."

The profit growth contrasts

with the experience of many "go-go" Net commerce stocks, such as Amazon.com, which are enjoying huge sales booms but have yet to earn a penny in profit.

ECsoft specialises in the provision of computer solutions to businesses. These include e-commerce solutions and Internet access.

Recent contracts have included an Internet banking system for a Scandinavian bank, and a new Internet booking system for a cruise liner which allows the operator to bypass travel agents. Clients include BT, Esso and Unisys.

Another productive area for the company has been the provision of data warehousing systems enabling retailers to analyse buying patterns of customers who have loyalty cards.

To help support its growth, ECsoft has recruited the e-commerce team from Digital, the computer group.

The bumper profits pushed

ECsoft shares up by 52.5p to a new high of 2,125p, valuing the company at £250m. The company is expected to acquire other software businesses in France and the Benelux region as well as smaller firms in the UK and Scandinavia.

SPORT

The Arsenal manager's raid on the illustrious Gallic football academy has been condemned in his native land

Wenger's coup leaves French looking for spies



RICHARD WILLIAMS

"WELCOME to the psychodrama!" With a smile and an outstretched hand, André Mérèlle strode across the foyer of France's Institut National de Football. "Let me introduce you to spy number one," he said. Outside, on a garden path overshadowed by a 10ft-high gold replica of the World Cup, two middle-aged men stood talking. One of them broke off to shake hands.

Mérèlle indicated the other man. "This is spy number two." There was wry laughter. "And you may call me spy number three."

André Mérèlle, Claude Dusseau and Joachim Francisco Filho, grouped together in the ornamental garden of a French château, with a mist clinging to the surrounding forest. In a setting fit for the three musketeers, here were the three spies. The villains of French football. Traitors to the cause. And spies, worst of all, for the perfidious English.

Two weeks ago, the news broke that Arsène Wenger had signed yet another French player for his Highbury squad. And this time the boy was barely old enough to lace his own boots. Still two months away from his 16th birthday, Jérémie Aliadière had been signed to a reported seven-year contract worth about £1.2m.

In France, the response was immediate and heated. "It's a disgrace," Noël Le Graët, the president of the French league, announced. "His coaches, his teachers and his parents should ask themselves a few questions about this auction of a child of 15."

Who is Jérémie Aliadière? A centre-forward whose potential had been spotted at the age of seven and now, with five appearances in the national under-15 side to his name, a star of the junior teams of Racing Club de France. And from Monday to Friday a student at the INF, the institute in the grounds of the Château Monjouy at Clairefontaine, the former country home of a member of the Lazard banking family, where Dusseau, Filho and Mérèlle are the guardians of a project that has been described as the key to the technical policy of French football, a policy whose integrity had suddenly come under threat.

The French are very aware that their best players usually find fame and fortune outside their own frontiers. Of the 11 who started the World Cup final on the eve of Bastille Day, only two were playing for clubs in the French league. Fans and administrators alike are proud of the way French talent earns such practical recognition abroad, but are sensitive about the implications for the standing of the domestic game. And now the flower of French football had been plucked before it had even come into bud.

In outbidding the representatives of FC Rennes, who offered just over a million pounds,

Wenger had also seen off firm interest not just from several other French clubs, led by Paris St-Germain, but from Barcelona and Internazionale. "It's not just a financial decision," Laurent Aliadière, the boy's father, told journalists. "We're not a poor family. If we chose Arsenal, it was because of what was offered on the sporting side. Certainly, football is a professional sport, and money is part of it. But we liked what Arsène Wenger had to say.

"London is only an hour from Paris by plane, two hours by train. If he'd joined Monaco, say, it would have been worse on that level. So it wasn't a gesture against the French clubs, it was just that Arsenal showed us the best opportunity. I don't know how they came to hear of him. But he's played in the

players go abroad, they learn, they grow in experience, and it's good for the national team."

Two days later Mérèlle sat in the institute's refectory, tucking into a *blanquette de veau*, mulling over Jérémie Aliadière, and preparing his defence against the charge of espionage and treason.

"Football is small world," he said, "and today it's all about money. But we're not advisers in this respect. We're not agents. We're very cautious about that, because when a professional club here can't get a boy to sign with them, they tend to say, 'Ah well, the coaches at the institute advised him to go elsewhere.'

Sixty boys from the Paris region, aged between 13 and 16, are currently receiving instruction at Clairefontaine. A further 240 boys pass through six other centres around the country. All of them are weekly boarders, staying in a dormitory building in the château's grounds. From Monday to Friday, they go by coach to local schools and then train from four o'clock to six o'clock. On Friday nights their parents arrive to take them home. On Sundays the boys play for the junior sides of their clubs before returning to the institute in the evening.

"Last year we had applications from 450 boys," Mérèlle said. "We picked 24. Each year two or three are eliminated, and we end up with a final year of 18 boys. We try to take the most skillful players. There's no question of size or strength. It's just the skills. And speed. We try to take speedy boys."

"What we notice is that the skillful players also have the best understanding of the game. They're more attuned. Of course, some boys will grow up and their physical potential will be their main quality. Some will be not so skillful but they are so speedy that they can have some success. But when they have both speed and skill, that is a good thing."

The afternoon training consists almost entirely of games and drills aimed at developing technique. "There's very little physical education. Everything is with the ball. We have a gymnasium, but we use it for playing football. When they play football for two hours, the boys are running and jumping, and just by playing they are developing their endurance. We test them from time to time, and the tests prove we are right, because they do as well in physical tests as the rest of the national under-15 or under-16 squads. Sometimes better."

Nor is tactical education a priority. "In the first two years we don't teach them team building because we have no team. Only in the third year does the institute have a team. We concentrate on the first principles of the game. But not strategy. That comes later."

The importance of school-work, on the other hand, is stressed from the start. "They follow the normal studies, like any French children. Some are good, some are not so good. What we say is, 'OK, you were selected to come here because you are good at football, but the most important thing is studies. At the end of the three years here we shall see if you're ca-

pable of joining a professional club or not.' Most of them do. But even if you do, we say, you must know that out of five, six, or seven, only one will become a professional footballer. So you have to work at school, too."

All this costs about £6,000 a year for each boy, which is about what it would cost to send him to a minor English public school. And that, apart from the principle of the thing, is what

has raised hackles in the Aliadière affair. A national investment has directly benefited a foreign enterprise.

"I don't know what can be done to prevent it," Mérèlle said. "Maybe the parents could sign a paper promising to sign a contract with a French club when the boy leaves the institute. But maybe that wouldn't be legal. Or they could promise, if he signed with a foreign club,

to pay the federation back." In the case of Jérémie Aliadière, it's too late for that. So what kind of a player is he? "Sort of... Van Basten," Mérèlle said, with a note of fondness in his voice. "Looks like him. Tall, slim, speedy, scores goals. Good player."

In the spring, the talent in question will pack his bags and be driven down the tree-lined avenues of Clairefontaine,

the last time – untouched, one can only hope, by the current psychodrama. A few weeks later he will arrive in London, where he will settle into accommodation with his grandparents, deputed to act as chaperones during his first two years in England. And then the rest of us may begin to learn what France has lost and Arsenal has gained.

A suture, as they say.



Jérémie Aliadière, Arsenal's new recruit, playing for France's under-15 team (above) and lining up two years ago for his local club, FC Rambouillet (below, second from right in front row)

Top photograph: TempSport



Clairefontaine, the impressive home of France's Institut National de Football

TempSport

national under-15s. That's a good explanation, non?"

Not as far as the furious Le Graët was concerned. "Here is a boy, educated and coached within the national structures of French football, who leaves for the highest bidder," he raged.

"What happened is obvious. Let's call a spade a spade. Arsène Wenger has an employee stalking the corridors of the Institute."

A week after Le Graët's outburst, a general council meeting of the French federation and the league agreed to form a commission of inquiry into the affair, in order to discover if employees of the institute at Clairefontaine had indeed acted as intermediaries between the player and the English club. "The FFF hunts

the trouble," Mérèlle said, "that French football clubs are not rich enough to keep their best players. "Even after the World Cup," he said, "we don't have big crowds. Television fees aren't as big as they are in England. We are not a very important country for football. We are not fanatics. So the

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ON MONDAY

Richard Williams on the enigma of Nicolas Anelka



MIKE ROWBOTTOM

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On the eve of the conference, Samaranch had issued a long list of corrections over media inaccuracies, pointing out that had asked "several years ago" that people stop referring to him as "excellency", the diplomatic title from his days as Spanish ambassador. As the opening speaker to address the gathered membership, he can guess the first word which is issued from his mouth. Change takes time in the IOC.

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But to return to the departing figure of General McCaffrey. As his entourage gathered around, one figure broke away from the group and paused beside a reporter before placing one word confidentially into his ear. "Background." The reporter prepared himself. "This is cabinet-approved," rasped his mysterious new friend, before moving away.

A few seconds later he was

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A new test for human growth hormone would be in place by the 2000 Olympics after the success of a four-year IOC-funded research project. No it wouldn't. The test would be held up by further verification requiring another \$3m (£2.1m). No it wouldn't, said the research leader. Everything was still on course for Sydney.

The conference was a success, said Samaranch. It es-

tablished a new \$25m (£15m) anti-doping agency and put in place a two-year minimum ban for doping. No it wasn't. The whole thing had been headed off with a deal. No it hadn't, because Samaranch said he was unaware of any such deal. But, no, he wasn't really unaware...

Much of the conference debate was well suited to the Olympic environment, forming as it did a linked sequence of perfectly circular arguments. Sebastian Coe, a member of the contributing working party, looked like a man in need of serious diversion as he took a short break from the inaction on Wednesday.

Welcome to new Olympic sport of bluff and fluff

GENERAL BARRY R McCaffrey, director of the White House Drug Policy Office, had concluded his briefing. For a man who was deployed to ring-fence Columbia's illegal drug operation, shaking up the International Olympic Committee on their home turf was pretty straightforward stuff.

Accordingly, the general had told the World Conference on Doping in Sport that the guardians of the Olympic movement need to get democratic, pro-active and financially accountable. Soon. This message did not appear to go down well. At the conclusion of the Lausanne conference, the beleaguered 78-year-old whose infirm hand still guides this

wealthy private club made what might have been an accidental reference to his American guest as "General McCarthy". What Juan Antonio Samaranch

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But at least my friend was able to look on the bright side. Had it not been for a hold-up at a dinner for European sports ministers, that other well-known Chelsea fan, Tony Banks, would have turned up as well. And he would probably have been less polite about it than Coe.

Erratic Britons miss the cut

LEE WESTWOOD and Darren Clarke, the two pre-tournament favourites, crashed out of the Benson and Hedges Malaysian Open yesterday.

Clarke's worst round for more than two and a half years sent him on his way by lunchtime and then, after a five-hour wait, he was joined by Westwood, whose four-over-par total of 148 proved one too many.

While America's Gerry Norquist had his second successive 67 to put him on 10-under-par total and secure a five-stroke lead, Clarke's 79 meant he was near the rear of the 150-strong field on 11 over.

The last time the Ulsterman, second to Colin Montgomerie on last season's Order of Merit, scored higher than that was when he took 80 in the 1996 Scottish Open at Carnoustie.

Westwood, having also opened with a 76, had an eagle at the 530-yard 13th as he compiled a second-round 72, but it was not enough.

Clarke, who has not played since November, described his performance as "shockingly bad", adding "I came here with such high hopes, but there was nothing positive in that at all."

"Everything was unbelievable. I practised OK, but as soon as I teed up in the competition I was totally unable to hit it on the right side of the flag. The course is set up tough and I just kept hitting it in the rough."

Westwood, returning after an eight-week break, summed up his display with the words "very rusty" and "very scrappy".

The Ryder Cup pair were back on the Sajana course at breakfast time yesterday to complete first rounds held over because of lightning on Thursday.

Clarke's first shot was an eight-foot birdie attempt on the 14th but he knocked it five feet past and missed the return. It set the tone for the day.

Setting off on his second

Korda suspended by Czech association

THE CZECH Tennis Association yesterday initiated disciplinary proceedings against their countryman Petr Korda, who failed a drug test at Wimbledon and suspended him from playing in his home country for a year.

The CTA earlier had demanded suspension of Korda, to no avail. A Czech news agency said the start of the disciplinary proceedings means he cannot play on Czech territory until the case is finished.

Korda will be little affected by the ban, however, since he gave up Davis Cup tennis for the Czech Republic last year and seldom appears at home.

In December, an independent appeals committee appointed by the International Tennis Federation announced

TENNIS

that Korda was guilty of a doping offence. He tested positive for nandrolone after his quarter-final Wimbledon defeat by Tim Henman last year.

According to ITF rules, Korda should have been suspended for a year, but the panel cited "exceptional circumstances" saying the ban did not apply as Korda did not know how the drug got into his system. Meanwhile, Korda remains free to play.

This is a paradoxical situation," the CTA chairman, Karel Pospisil, said yesterday. "The ITF has its own policy. Our decision is based on the fact that we are signatories to the international agreements against doping."

BASKETBALL

THURSDAY'S LATE RESULTS: Euroleague Second Preliminary round: Group E: Panathinaikos (Gr) 76 v Cibona Zagreb (Croat) 72; Maccabi Tel Aviv (Isr) 83 v Valencia (Sp) 72; Maccabi Tel Aviv (Isr) 104 v Fenerbahce (Turk) 65; Grissom NC Vilnius (Lith) 62 v Zadar (Croat) 61; Real Madrid (Sp) 72 v Ucrania (Ukr) 65; Olympia Lubljana (Slovenia) 70 v Bayern Munich (Ger) 59; Virtus Bologna (Ital) 78 v PONI Szczecin (Pol) 66.

BOXING

Anthony Hanna, from Birmingham, will fight for the British and Commonwealth heavyweight title in his 48th professional fight. The 48-year-old will challenge Belfast's Dama Kelly in March in London.

FOOTBALL

Vass Borkoski, Sheffield United's Greek international defender, has walked out of the club after being refused permission to return to his homeland while out injured. Borkoski, who joined the Welsh First Division side from AEK Athens 18 months ago, has returned to Greece against the club's wishes. Steve Bruce, the United manager, said yesterday.

Dennis Bergkamp, the Arsenal forward, and Edgar Davids of Juventus will return to an attacking Dutch side for the friendly against Portugal in Paris on Wednesday. The pair missed the match against Germany in November because of injury. Ronald de Boer, also sidelined for the German team, was included in the 18-man squad and is considered a certainty. The options are restricted as Michael Reiziger's injury leaves no clear candidate for the right back slot.

CYCLING

THURSDAY'S LATE RESULTS: Eroica delle Alpi Second stage (1st place, Miles to Sesto, 111): J Planchart (Bel)

GOLF

By MARK GARROD
in Kuala Lumpur

round after a short break, he had a double-bogey at the second and after a wild drive into a ditch and came home in a dreadful 42 with four bogeys and another double to finish.

Westwood had four holes of his first round to play on the resumption and finished them by taking three putts on the 18th for a bogey six.

When he did the same on the short 12th - his third of the second round - he knew he needed to improve if he was to survive.

On the very next hole the world No 6, winner of the event in 1997 and loser in a play-off last year, cut a superb five-wood over some trees on to the green at the 13th and holed from 20 feet for his eagle.

Twelve successive pars then followed before a bogey on the 413-yard eighth and a closing par left him dependent on others.

"It's about what I expected after eight weeks off," he said. "From walking 30 miles a week I've not been walking at all and you're bound to lose some strength."

Norquist, winner of the title in 1993 and second on the Asian money list three years ago, is five clear of a group of four; the Rochdale-born defending champion, Ed Fryatt, who has lived most of his life in Las Vegas, the Spaniard Tomas Munoz, the South Korean Choi Kyung-jun and another American, Dean Wilson.

Greg Norman missed the cut for the first time in 22 years on Australian home soil yesterday, in the tournament bearing his name. The former world No 1 crashed out of the Greg Norman International at The Lakes, Sydney, an event he won last year, after adding a second round 76 to the 77 he shot on Thursday.

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SKIING

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Maier was cautious coming into the championships, saying more experienced downhill skiers, such as Norway's Lasse Kjus would have an advantage on the demanding piste. However, after sharing the gold medal with Kjus in Tuesday's championship-opening super-

G, Maier feels he is relaxed enough to deliver a top performance in the blue ribbon race.

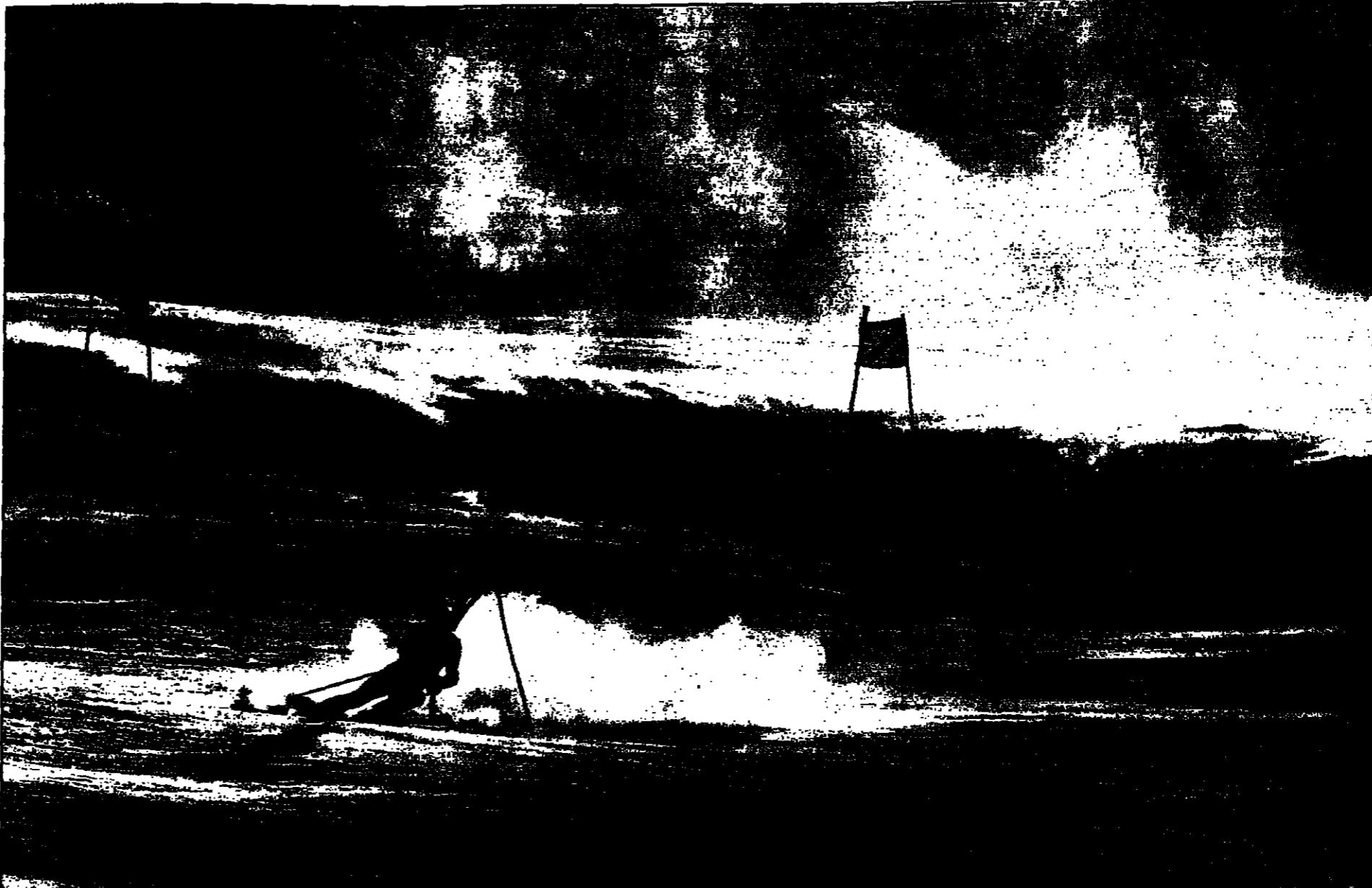
"There was a lot of pressure on me as everyone expected me to win the super-G," he said. "A heavy weight was lifted off my shoulders, now I can enjoy myself here."

Yet the Austrian warned that the difficulty of the course should not be underestimated and that Kjus, the World Cup

dowhill leader, was the favourite. "I like the slope and can do well here, but Kjus will be a tough rival," said Maier, who has won only a single World Cup downhill this season while Kjus has clinched four.

Kjus, who has had a recurring sinus infection during the northern winter, said he will not be going flat out. "Downhill racing is dangerous and I, therefore, never take every

risk. This is where the Austrians may have an advantage over me," said Kjus, the downhill silver medalist at both the 1997 World Championships and 1998 Olympics. "But Maier and I are not the only ones who can win here. There are a lot of other Austrians and Norwegians who can win. Last year I was negative about this course because it's too technical and then I won the race. This is not the type of downhill that I enjoy racing," he said.



A skier tackles the men's slalom at the Asian Winter Games at Yongpyong, South Korea, which attracted 1,300 competitors and officials from 16 countries

Reuters

Maier prepared to face 'Birds of Prey'

THE PISTE is called "The Birds of Prey" but Hermann Maier has no intention of doing anything in the World Championship downhill at Beaver Creek, Colorado. A year ago, the Austrian memorably hurtled through the air to disaster at the Nagano Winter Olympics but Kjus would have an advantage on the demanding piste.

He would happily settle for less excitement in today's World Championship downhill

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Coin it with Three Farthings

FOR THOSE who enjoy multiple bets there are interesting televisions options today. Three Farthings, who runs in Sandown's most valuable race, deserves a place in a Heinz, while Ottawa, the victor in the National Trial at Uttoxeter 12 months ago, will be a banker in several Canadians to retain the crown.

To come to Paul Nicholls' chaser first. Ottawa has run just once this term, when he put up perhaps the most intelligent display of his career. That came behind Earth Summit in the Becher Chase at Aintree, where the nine-year-old ran well for a long way until he realised it would be a lot safer just to stop. He considered Becher's Brook a fence too far.

Lord Gylene has no such problems with that obstacle. He cleared it cleanly and gloriously 22 months ago when collecting the Monday Grand National. The gelding had had plenty of time to savor that success as injury has limited him to just a single subsequent run, in Haydock's Tommy White Chase in December.

Lord Gylene jumped well that day until he got down to the rust and, by the end, he finished ahead of only Quixiz Crossed, one of the very worst horses in the land. Lord Gylene must come on that.

Also at Haydock, General Wolfe won the Peter Marsh Chase last month from some good horses and will be close today despite his 6lb penalty.

WETHERBY

HYPERION

1.20 Birkdale 1.50 Banker Count 2.25 Cumbrian Maestro 2.55 Royal Mountbrowne 3.30 Tono-co 4.00 Last Option 4.35 Head For The Hills

GOING: Good (Good to soft in places).
■ Left-hand oval circuit. Run-in 200yds slightly uphill.
■ Course is NE of town (B224 near junction of A58 and A1).
ADMISSION: Club £13 (accompanied under 18s free); Tattersalls; £9; Course £3 (OAPs £6) or £10 per head with up to four adults. Accompanied under 16s free. CAR PARK: Free.

FIVE-YEAR STATISTICS

■ LEADING TRAINERS: Mrs M Reaveley 40-188 (213%), T. East- erby 32-139 (23%), Mrs S Smith 12-109 (15.5%), D Nicholson 17-77 (21%).

■ LEADING DRIVERS: L Wyrer 46-183 (231%), P Niven 33-156 (212%), A Dobbin 22-129 (17.1%), G Guest 13-98 (22%).

■ FAVOURITES: 203-160 (42.3%).

BLINKED FIRST TIME: King Pin (12), Justin (22).

1.20 SPOFFORTH HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS C) £6,500 added 2m 7f

1 2620 BIRKDALE (12) (C) L Longo 8.20 ... W Downing (5)

2 101-33 COOL SPRING (H) D Hall 7.10 ... S Durkin

3 16-10 NATIVE FIELD (D) P Dohle 10.10 ... J Magford (7)

4 447-2 FOR CATHAL (12) M Reaveley 9.34 ... G Lee

5 - FLYER KING PIN (6) P Beaumont 7.10 ... R Supple B

- 5 declined -

BETTING: 5-2 Cumbrian Maestro, 11-2 Cool Spring, 7-2 Native Field, For Cathal, 8-1 Flyer Pin

FORM VERDICT

KING PIN is well up to winning the off a potentially favourable mark if he responds to fine-tune blinks. In-form Birkdale could be vulnerable on the anticipated rear ground, and Native Field may be the one to beat back over a more suitable distance.

1.10 AGATHA CHRISTIE SELLING H'CAP (CLASS G) (Div II) £2,500 added 1m 5f

1 364-3 ARTIC COURIER (H) D Goggin 8.00 ... W Ryan (5)

2 05-00 SAND CAY (14) (C) Miss G Kellaway 5.83 ... T Smith (3)

3 303-2 SLIMKETT (C) D Goggin 8.00 ... M Williams 6.2.0

4 04-02 ZADIA (11) (C) D Goggin 8.00 ... J Fanning (5)

5 34-26 SWEET ROMANCE (22) S Williams 6.8.0 ... P Dohle (5)

6 3-022 KATIES CRACKER (8) M Quinn 6.2.0 ... F Norton (4)

7 5-032 COASTGUARD HERO (6) D Goggin 8.00 ... J Fanning (7)

8 01-00 ZOLA (11) M Quinn 6.3.0 ... P Dohle (5)

- 5 declined -

BETTING: 5-2 Artic Courier, 7-2 Sweet Romance, 8-1 Zadia, 9-1 Katies Cracker, 10-1 Coastguard Hero, 11-2 Zola, 12-1 Uttoxeter, 13-1 Slimekett, 14-1 Artic Courier, 15-1 Sweet Romance, 16-1 others

FORM VERDICT

A good opportunity for KATIES CRACKER, who has turned in three good wins here recently and had Coastguards Hero and Uttoxeter well behind in a similar event over C20 last month. Slimekett and the frustrating Artic Courier look best of the remainder.

1.40 HELEN MCINNES MAIDEN STAKES (CLASS D) £5,250 added 1m 4f

1 33 BRUFF SPLENDOUR (7) M Johnson 9.10 ... J Fanning (5)

2 002-0 ROSELLITA (8) G Smith 8.9.0 ... R Perman (5)

3 04-07 SEVEN O SEVEN (7) P Cundell 6.1.0 ... S Whitfield (5)

4 0-40 PHANTOM (12) M Johnson 4.9.0 ... A Chapple (5)

5 025-2 ZADIA (11) G. Moore 4.9.0 ... J Fanning (5)

6 003-2 BURTONS FOULY (2) P Ingram 3.6.3 ... G Barwell (5)

7 000-3 MAGIC SPARK (1) M Johnson 3.8.3 ... J Fanning (5)

8 01-04 ZOLA (11) M Quinn 3.7.3 ... P Dohle (5)

- 5 declined -

BETTING: 7-2 Bruff Splendour, 8-1 Seven O Seven, 9-1 Zadia, Magic Spark, 10-1 Uttoxeter, 11-2 others

FORM VERDICT

Another week means another win for Helen McInnes can well on her debut but last month and any improvement on that will make her tough to beat. The trip will suit the modest Zadia, who has come along with Bruff Splendour and Seven O Seven.

2.15 AGATHA CHRISTIE SELLING H'CAP (CLASS G) (Div II) £2,500 added 1m 5f

1 004-6 MUHANDA (6) C Moore 6.0.0 ... Candy Morris 7.8

2 000-0 SPENCERS REVENGE (10) (C) P Butler 8.25 (Cancer) (7) 1

3 000-2 KPOL (AB) R A Murphy 6.8.0 ... G Barwell (5)

4 05-04 SR WALTER (8) A Murphy 6.8.0 ... G Barwell (5)

5 000-2 KPOL (AB) R A Murphy 6.8.0 ... G Barwell (5)

6 465-0 KEEPSAKE (14) M Usher 5.7.1 ... P Dohle (5)

7 000-5 CAROLINE GLORY (19) J Cawthron 5.7.1 ... P Dohle (5)

8 000-3 KEEPSAKE (14) M Usher 5.7.1 ... P Dohle (5)

9 00-03 THE SILK THIEF (COP) J Arkles 4.7.0 ... J Fanning (5)

- 5 declined -

Minimum weight: 7st 10lb. The handicap weight: Shantou 7st 8lb. The Skit 7lb.

BETTING: 9-4 Muhandha, 9-1 Bruff Splendour, 10-1 Spencer's Revenge, 10-1 Caroline Glory, 11-2 Silk Thief, 12-1 others

FORM VERDICT

Roslin Splendour deserves a change of luck, but AGCD TEST is going from strength to strength on this surface and there may be better still to come from him over today's longer trip.

BY RICHARD EDMONDSON

However, the sole favour ultimately falls on Fiddling The Facts (next best 1.45), who has been allowed to recuperate following her second in the Welsh National, for which she is penalised just 1lb.

The Tope Sandown Hurdle is as tricky as you might expect a bookmakers' Saturday sponsorship. The big team that comes rumbling over the horizon here will be leaving tracks from the West country. Martin Pipe has three entries, including Moondigua, the favourite.

RICHARD EDMONDSON
Map: Three Farthings (Sandown 4.10)
NB: Fiddling The Facts (Uttorester 1.45)

The seven-year-old won absurdly easily at Warwick on his seasonal debut, but the ground was heavy. The search for value is best left with THREE FARTHINGS (map 4.10). On one form line he has the beating of Moondigua, though his tendency to win by small margins could mean he is a hard horse for the handicapper to assess correctly.

Kurakko (3.05) has won over course and distance already, which is of great significance at Sandown and the railway fences, while Fine Thyme (3.35) is coming down in the weights without showing his ability has evaporated.

Florida Pearl now goes into the Hennessy Gold Cup on the back of a splendid piece of work on Thursday. "He's in good form and going well," Mullins added. "He's met it on really long strides before and got lengths. He's a very good natural jumper like Dawn Run, who won her Gold Cup after four runs and a fall."

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Pipe rule
three bar
record is
wretched

PUNTERS' GUIDE

The former top jump jockey
Steve Smith Eccles analyses
today's Sandown Hurdle

Kerawi: Has not sparkled at all this season.

Rainbow Frontier: The Pipe second string has each way credentials after finishing third to Lady Rebecca at Cheltenham. Alpine Panther: Winner of three of his four races this season and ran well in defeat behind Lady Rebecca at Cheltenham. Could make the frame.

Kings Measure: Stable is in and out of form but this fellow could run a big race if he is on song. Moondogina: Won in a hockeystick at Warwick and well backed all week. His weight looks a winning one.

Three Farthings: Won on seasonal debut at Wincanton and can improve. Sure to be thereabouts at the death.

World Express: Very disappointing last time and needs to improve dramatically.

UTTOXETER

12.45: EXECUTIVE KING has already won four times this season and should have the class and experience to give weight to some promising young rivals. Among these is Smarthy, who looked a young chaser to follow with victories at Warwick and Leicester.

1.15: Pealings has had three hard races in succession but all were against decent opposition and this game grey holds his form well. Sailed seemed to find drift too far last time and is sure to play a bigger hand today. But CHURCHTOWN GLEN can regain the winning thread on this front-runners' track. Steve Brooksbank believes this six-year-old still has improvement in him.

1.45: Welsh Grand National winner Kendal Cavalier renews rivalry with the runner-up, Fiddling The Facts, who will surely gain her revenge if she jumps soundly. They may both play second fiddle to impressive Peter Marsh winner GENERAL WOLFE, who can defy an 8lb rise in the weights following that victory.

SANDOWN

3.05: Kurakka has made a highly impressive start to his chasing career, but the value lies with RIVER DAWN, who will be suited by the move down in trip after his long through the mud behind Collier Bay at Haydock. The front-running New Zealander NO RETREAT should last longer than at Newcastle three

years ago when he returned home with a 'dirty nose'.

3.35: KING LUCIFER was untroubled to surge 8 lengths clear of Executive King on the run-in at Kempton last month and is expected to reverse placings from his meeting with Torkill Express and Calliope Bay at Ascot in December.

4.10: One of the most competitive handicaps so far this season can fall to KINGS MEASURE, whose win over 2m last time was particularly eye-catching given that today's trip should suit him so much better. There are plenty of obvious dangers, notably the easy Warwick scorer Moondogina, and a less obvious one in bottom-weight Monroe, who scored twice at this track last season.

4.40: There have to be doubts about whether the highly-regarded Deep Water will be at his best today. Last year's winner Master Bevelized presents few worries on that score, but his best may not be good enough to cope with MIDNIGHT LEGEND, who fared as well as could have been expected against a stronger opposition on his first two starts this season, his first since a return from stallion duties.

10-YEAR-TALE ON THE SANDOWN HURDLE

1989	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98
Fate of the favourites:	3-5	A	4	6	1	7	1	P	2
Winner's place in betting:	0	A	0	1	0	1	3	2	D
Starting-prices:	20-1	A	8-1	33-1	7-2	8-1	3-1	6-1	7-2
Winners' weights:	102	A	100	102	97	100	102	102	113
Winners' ages:	8	A	5	5	6	7	9	6	8
Profit or loss to 1st stayer: Favourites -53.00									
Percentage of winners placed 1st, 2nd or 3rd in last race: 56%									
Shortest-priced winner: Miracle Man (1985) 3-1									
Longest-priced winner: Buck Sapphire (1982) 33-1									
Top trainer: J.H. Gerald (3) - Special Vintage (1989), Trainglot (1993 & 1996)									
Top jockey: M. Dwyer (2) - Special Vintage (1989), Trainglot (1993)									

FIRST SHOW

SANDOWN 3.05

Home	H	L	S	T
Kensai	64	54	74	
No Retreat	3-1	5-1	52	31
King Express	4-1	9-2	4-1	
King Of Spots	1-1	7-1	8-1	7-1
River Dawn	10-1	10-1	10-1	9-1
Beth Reveson	16-1	16-1	16-1	16-1
Bitter Offer	1-1	16-1	16-1	16-1
Monroe Player	25-1	25-1	25-1	
Gardiner	40-1	33-1	40-1	33-1
Winkie Harvey	55-1	55-1	55-1	55-1
Each-way: 8/10 on odds places 1-2				

UTTOXETER 12.45

Home	H	S	T
Sandy	41	31	41
Rock'n'Roll	41	41	41
Asian Goddess	41	41	52
Knight Templar	61	52	52
Executive King	7-1	7-1	7-1
Scotsman Green	7-1	6-2	7-1
Monroe	16-1	16-1	16-1
Arabian Soul	16-1	16-1	16-1
Pedex	15-2	7-1	7-1
Shetland Party	16-1	16-1	16-1
Each-way: 8/10 on odds places 1-2			

SANDOWN 3.35

Home	C	H	L	S	T
King Express	3-1	3-1	5-2	5-2	103
King Lucifer	10-2	9-2	3-1	3-1	72
Peter Dwyer	9-2	9-2	7-2	7-2	52
Colin Harvey	3-1	3-1	5-2	5-2	52
Calliope Bay	6-1	7-2	5-1	5-1	84
Monroe Player	25-1	25-1	25-1	25-1	25-1
Gardiner	30-1	30-1	30-1	30-1	30-1
Winkie Harvey	55-1	55-1	55-1	55-1	55-1
Each-way: 8/10 on odds places 1-2					

UTTOXETER 1.15

Home	C	H	L	S	T
Kathy Chen	7-2	9-2	9-2	9-2	9-2
King Lucifer	10-2	9-2	3-1	3-1	72
Peter Dwyer	9-2	9-2	7-2	7-2	52
Colin Harvey	3-1	3-1	5-2	5-2	52
Calliope Bay	6-1	7-2	5-1	5-1	84
Monroe	25-1	25-1	25-1	25-1	25-1
World Express	25-1	25-1	25-1	25-1	25-1
Just Hippo	25-1	25-1	31-1	31-1	31-1
Monroe Player	25-1	25-1	25-1	25-1	25-1
Gardiner	30-1	30-1	30-1	30-1	30-1
Winkie Harvey	55-1	55-1	55-1	55-1	55-1
Each-way: 8/10 on odds places 1-2					

SANDOWN 4.10

Home	C	H	L	S	T
Mongolian	7-4	24	21	21	
King Express	6-1	4-1	9-2	9-2	
Monroe	5-1	5-1	5-1	5-1	
Thorn	5-1	5-1	5-1	5-1	
Alpha Partner	10-1	9-1	10-1	9-1	
Melody Maid	10-1	9-1	5-1	5-1	
Time Package	1-1	31	8-1	10-1	
Colin Harvey	10-1	9-1	5-1	11-1	
Monroe	25-1	25-1	25-1	25-1	
World Express	25-1	25-1	25-1	25-1	
Just Hippo	25-1	25-1	31-1	31-1	
Monroe Player	25-1	25-1	25-1	25-1	
Gardiner	30-1	30-1	30-1	30-1	
Winkie Harvey	55-1	55-1	55-1	55-1	
Each-way: 8/10 on odds places 1-2					

UTTOXETER 1.45

Home	C	H	L	S	T
Polding The Facts	5-2	5-2	5-2	114	
General Wolfie	24-1	52	114	94	
Colin Harvey	1-1	31	8-1	10-1	
Monroe	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	
Thorn	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	
Alpha Partner	10-1	9-1	10-1	9-1	
Melody Maid	10-1	9-1	5-1	5-1	
Time Package	1-1	31	8-1	10-1	
Colin Harvey	10-1	9-1	5-1	11-1	
Monroe	25-1	25-1	25-1	25-1	
World Express	25-1	25-1	25-1	25-1	
Just Hippo	25-1	25-1	31-1	31-1	
Monroe Player	25-1	25-1	25-1	25-1	
Gardiner	30-1	30-1	30-1	30-1	
Winkie Harvey	55-1	55-1	55-1	55-1	
Each-way: 8/10 on odds places 1-2					

THE INDEPENDENT
RACING SERVICES
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LIVE COMMENTARIES RESULTS
ALL COURSES RESULTS
0891 261 970

LEOPARDSTOWN 3.40
TOMORROW

Home	C	H	L	S	T
Flora Pool	8-11	4-6	8-11	4-6	
Encore	14-1	14-1	14-1	25-1	
Bob Dwyer	C-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	
Papillon	1-1	16-1	16-1	16-1	
Adington Boy	30-1	30-1	30-1	30-1	
Blackie	10-1	10-1	10-1	10-1	
Each-way: 8/10 on odds places 1-2					

SANDOWN

HYPERION
3.35 King Lucifer
4.10 Kings Measure
2.30 Door To Door
3.05 River Dawn

GOING: Chase course - Good; Hurdles course - Good to Soft (Good in places). ■ Right-hand course: seven testing fences along back straight; run-in of 300yds. ■ Course is on A307 - 4m S of Kingston, Esher station (service from London, Waterloo). ■ Admission: £1.50. Club: C17, Junior Club, 21 yrs. ■ Grandstand & Paddock: C12, Park enclosures £5. ■ CAR PARK: Free.

Five-Year Statistics

■ LEADING TRAINERS: D. Nicholls 20-95 (21%), P. Hobbs 15-91 (25%), J. Gifford 13-20 (18%). ■ LEADING JOCKEYS: R. Donnelly 31-91 (24%), P. McCoy 17-87 (18%), J. Osborne 16-88 (16%), M. Fitzgerald 14-12 (12%). ■ FAVOURITES: 10-1 (34%). ■ LONG DISTANCE RUNNERS: Globe Runner (300) 287 miles.

BLINKERED FIRST TIME: Tommy Carlson (Macedon, 125), Bognor (230).

BETTING: 13-8 Kasihka, 11-4 No Retreat, 4-1 Hold Express, 7-1 King Of Sparta, 10-1 River Dawn, 14-1 Best Amazin, 16-1 Better Offer, 25-1 Native Player, 40-1 others.

1998: Jack Doyle 7-1 6C Leyden 5-2 (Non-Triple-Days) 6 ran

3.05 SCILLY ISLES NOVICE CHASE (Grade 1) (CLASS A) £25,000 added 2m 4f 110yds Value C4

1 6-13 BANKSIDE AVENUE (24) (S) D Venables M Parsons 6 11 6... T Murphy black, emerald green triple diamond

2 01-SP BETTER OFFER (7) (S) Eric Parker M. Parsons 7 11



THE SWEeper

BY CLIVE WHITE AND NICK HARRIS



FA powerbrokers made in Sheffield

SOCCER THE LONDON mob, Terry Venables and Glenn Hoddle, have had their chance. Now it's the turn of the Sheffield mafia to take control at Lancaster Gate - and we're not just talking about Howard Wilkinson.

Apart from the FA's technical director and caretaker England coach, there are also the international committee members Geoff Thompson and Dave Richards, while completing the powerbrokers' quartet is David Davies, who has been standing in as chief executive following the departure of Graham Kelly. Even two of the newly appointed coaches, Nigel Pearson and Nigel Spackman, are from Sheffield.

Davies, who has hardly been out of the public eye during the recent Hoddle furore, is the most surprising product of the Steel City, not least because he is a dyed-in-the-wool Manchester United fan. "Well, he is from London" as a colleague remarked. Davies has not forgotten his roots, however, and occasionally returns to Sheffield to lecture at the university in journalism.

Sheffield used to be called the "Cradle of Football". In fact Sheffield FC, an amateur club, claims to be the oldest club in the world. So football is really coming home. But for how long is another matter.

Rather like the tenure of its two clubs, Wednesday and United, in the top flight, it may only be temporary. After all, Wilkinson is only acting coach, Thompson is only acting FA chairman and Davies is only acting chief executive.

THE DISABLED have been in the spotlight the past week after Hoddle's crass comments about them, but in the Northern Counties East League Darren Bonnington goes about his business in the Malfy Main goal without fuss. One-handed saves are par for the course for Bonno, who was born without a left hand and has just a little finger and a thumb. He has compensated for his disability so well that opponents don't even know that he has one. Steve Fleetwood, his manager, said: "I have known Bonno a long time and he's a great lad and an outstanding keeper and I believe he has

the talent to play at a much higher level. The fact that he has only one hand does not bother him nor does it interfere with his goalkeeping. He commands his area and comes and catches the crosses that are knocked into the penalty box full of confidence." Bonno even refrains from punching the ball. "I find it just as easy to take 'em catches," he said. There are a few foreign keepers who could learn something from him.

SONG SHEET

Extract from a Wolves song to the supporters of the Baggies.
 "They come from Sandwell,
 they have no use for knowledge.
 They seek glory
 for Cindy Crawford,
 and that's why the
 pigs might fly.
 They tell me that their club was
 lost,
 and in that case we'll have
 Steve Bull,
 they said fine.
 When in ten seasons' time
 we'll be the best in the Old Gold
 and the new.
 We'll be the greatest Old Gold
 and the new.
 We want to win.
 We want to win.
 We want to win.
 Well, what else could I do?
 I said, "P*** off 39
 Time: F-tp's "Common People".

WHEN THe recently appointed Worcester City manager, Graham Allner, told his board he knew just the man to "get us out of jail", one hopes that he warned them that "first, though, we have to get him out of jail." When Allner made Darren Steadman - whom he had signed 12 years earlier when manager of Kidderminster Harriers - his first signing, the only problem was that Steadman was serving a two-year sentence with one year suspended for a £70,000 mortgage and wine bar swindle. The authorities at Hewell Grange Prison, near Redditch, however, have allowed Steadman to play for the Dr Martens League Premier Division club under a resettlement scheme for offenders and the 29-year-old was allowed out to make his debut for the reserves against Telford United on Wednesday. Watching him was his friend and former Kidderminster teammate, Lee Hughes, now with West

Bromwich Albion and the country's leading goalscorer. There could be a problem, though, with evening kick-offs. Steadman has to be back behind bars by 1.30pm.

SOCCER IF YOU thought John Spencer was relieved to get away from Everton after the resurrection of his Motherwell move - "it couldn't have been any better had Cindy Crawford been on the other end of the line asking me out for dinner" - you should have heard what Billy Davies, the Motherwell manager and Spencer's brother-in-law, had to say when he thought Spencer had returned to Goodison for good after his loan spell. "I feel like going home and dousing myself in four-star petrol," he said. "Just how do you replace John Spencer?"

It must make a pleasant change for the wee man to be loved so after the disparaging remarks made about him by Everton chairman Peter Johnson. I'm not too sure, though, whether Pat Nevin, the Motherwell chief executive, who secured his release for £500,000, will be so delighted. "When I get back up the road I'll have to kiss him on the lips," said Spencer.

DON GOODMAN knows just the place for those players - and I don't mean David Beckham - who are tired of being booed week in, week out. Japan.

The former Wolves striker, who is back in England on loan to Barnsley during the J-League's close season, said of his new experience with San Frecce Hiroshima: "There is plenty of skill in Japan but no one seems to take it personally."

"You get the same amount of applause as you lose as when you win."

In fact, he found himself missing the pressure that he was under to perform while with the First Division's great underachievers.

"I missed the intensity of the English game - the desire to win and the hurt you feel if you lose," he said. Goodman must be loving it at Oakwell just now then - he hasn't scored a single goal since he joined them.

Goodman returns to Japan for the start of the new season on 18 March, two days after Wolves visit Barnsley.

MASCOT ON THE MAT



Name: Wolfe Wolf.
 Club: Wolves (surprisingly).
 Appearance: A wolf sporting an old gold and black shirt.
 Crime sheet: Wolfe had the Ashton Gate crowd howling with laughter when he took it upon himself to be the instigator of a mass brawl at half-time during a First Division game in November. Wolfe was joined by the Bristol City cat and three pigs - representing double glazing firm Coldecal - in a mass bout of fistcuffs. An FA spokesman said: "Certain actions that might be regarded as hilarious by one set of supporters might strike the others as provocative."

In mitigation, Your Honour: Bristol City supporters found the whole incident quite the funniest thing they'd seen all day. One said: "It was the best half-time entertainment I've ever seen in 22 years watching football." It was the only thing the Robins' fans had to smile about as their side were mauled 6-1. Other information: Coldecal later informed Wolves they will no longer send their pig mascot to their matches. At least Wolfe is still in a job, unlike City Cat, who was sacked on the spot.

Paul Stevenson

MY TEAM



MICHAEL PARKINSON
BARNESLEY

CHAT SHOW LEGEND

"I was taken to my first game at five. At half-time I was asked 'What do you think?' and I said 'Can I go home now?' and I was told 'No' and it started there. In the late 60s or early 70s I was over in America. It's like a sickness, but you try to find the results and I looked in one of the papers and it said 'Stockport County 21, Barnsley 1'. I spent \$15 or \$20 on phone calls trying to find out the worst and discovered the score had actually been 1-1, which was almost as bad as 21-1. The best moment was when we were promoted to the Premiership. And watching Danny Blanchflower, well that was a joy and a pleasure."

FAN'S EYE VIEW

BRADFORD CITY

BY PAUL STEVENSON

Barnsley's fans when I say that I hope Bradford make it. After the way those fans conducted themselves, they deserve their day in the sun. Regular supporters have long said the seventh-biggest city in England deserves Premiership football, and it would be fantastic if this could be their year.

Like Barnsley, because nobody has given much credence to their rise, there is no pre-

sure and no expectation on the players to complete the job. As Danny Wilson will testify, this can bring with it an easier ride to the finish line. Back in 1997, Wolves were the big-name team who were expected to overhaul their unfancied rivals, but, Mark McGhee will remember his side's required upturn in form never materialised. This season, for "big-spending Midlands rivals with a tendency to blow up" read Birmingham, not Wolves.

My, this is so spooky, I'm half-expecting Bradford to get promoted, come straight down again, and then see Paul Jewell scoot off to Leeds United after telling everybody he loved them and would not go. On second thoughts, there is surely just the one manager with such a lack of principles?

Make no mistake, whatever anybody says, Bradford de-

IN T'NET

Found on the Web: Football 365. DANNY KELLY'S daily is probably the best source of up-to-date football news and features on the web. On top of all the breaking news you'd expect, the opinion polls such as yesterday's (which asked whether a Scot could be the England manager and looked likely to find a small majority against), the critical round-up of the day's media coverage, and the "trollies" section (footballers talking cobblers) are all interesting staples. The "lookalikes", while amusing, have shown an increasing reliance on cartoon characters, but no one who looks at the Robbie Fowler-George Formby likeness can cry foul. <http://www.football365.co.uk/>

SEEN BUT NOT BOUGHT

QUOTE THE ugliest football-related cuddly toy must be the Arsenal Gunnersaurus, a green monster in a club shirt. The idea is, for some bizarre reason, tucked into a pack that look like thermal long-johns. Rumours that Arsene Wenger insisted on the club shop stocking these items (£18.99 each) solely because they are bought after France and he covets all things popular across the channel (usually players) are unlikely ever to be confirmed.

THEY'RE NOT ALL DENNIS BERGKAMP

Unsung foreign legionsaries No 25
KJELL OLOFSSON: The 33-year-old Swedish striker played for Örgryte and Västra Frölunda in his home country before moving to Moss in Norway, and then, in 1996, to Dundee United for £400,000. Olofsson has won but a solitary international cap, at the Olympics, but has been a firm supporters' favourite since he moved to Scotland. Tangerines' fans sing 'Olofsson's in the air' to the tune of 'Love is in the air' to their hero, who was top scorer at Tannadice last season and the third top scorer in Scotland. Perhaps played too wide to fulfil his potential, Kjell scored last week against Dunfermline nevertheless.



The joy of Bantams beating heavyweights

WHEN my beloved Barnsley beat Bradford City on 26 April 1997 to secure promotion to the Premier League, it was almost too easy to forget that our vanquished rivals had taken another step towards the trapdoor to the Second Division. Nothing else mattered - the Reds were up, and that was it. The final whistle blew, and the inevitable pitch invasion began. What was this, though - why were Bradford's supporters staying in their seats, clapping, cheering, as though they were the ones who had something to celebrate? Of all the images I remember of that fateful afternoon, nothing sticks in my mind more than those away fans, bedecked in orange and yellow, putting their own woes to one side to share in our joy.

Five days later, on the night of the General Election, 500

Barnsley supporters made the short journey to the Pulse Stadium to see Bradford take on Oldham Athletic in a game which some would argue was more important than the shenanigans between Blair and Major Chris Kamara's team had to win, or fall through the trapdoor. Happily, win they did, and the 3-0 drubbing of Queen's Park Rangers on the final Sunday ensured the Bantams would be playing First Division football in 1998.

Now, almost two years on, as Bradford lie second in the First Division, the similarities between City's promotion push are strikingly similar to those of Barnsley. All season City have been considered unworthy of a place at the top end of the table, and the club have not been given the recognition their achievements merit.

I'm sure I speak for all

sure and no expectation on the players to complete the job. As Danny Wilson will testify, this can bring with it an easier ride to the finish line. Back in 1997, Wolves were the big-name team who were expected to overhaul their unfancied rivals, but, Mark McGhee will remember his side's required upturn in form never materialised. This season, for "big-spending Midlands rivals with a tendency to blow up" read Birmingham, not Wolves.

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Make no mistake, whatever anybody says, Bradford de-

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

You and I have been physically given two hands and two legs and half-decent brains. Some people have not been born like that for a reason. The karma is working from another lifetime. I have nothing to hide about that. What you saw you reap. You have to look at things that happened in your life and ask why. It comes around. Glenn Hoddle, England coach

I do as I'm told. They give me the pick and shovel and dig where they say to dig. Howard Wilkinson on the immediate future

I could have tried to save it all by revealing my mum works at a school for the disabled. Glenn Hoddle keeps it in the family

The players are being brainwashed. Gary Player on the way golfers are over-coached

I've had my eyes gouged, the back of my head punched, my ribs elbowed and various parts of my anatomy squeezed. When any side starts those antics you know you've got them beaten. Ulster prop Rob Irwin reflects on Colomiers in the Heineken Cup final



Premiership: Some observers thought £6m fee was too high but Spurs' fit-again forward feels he can repay investment

Ferdinand fired up for good times



IAN STAFFORD

IT SEEMS odd to suggest that his time spent as a steam cleaner, van driver, and a painter and decorator can be put to good use now as he battles to re-establish himself as one of the leading strikers in English football. But this is what Les Ferdinand, once one of the most feared footballovers in the penalty box, uses to help in his fight to fulfil the promise Tottenham Hotspur believed in when they forked out £1m for him two and a half years ago.

Since that move from Newcastle United, where Ferdinand had hitherto enjoyed much success first without, and then with Alan Shearer, his reputation as one of the most lethal finishers in the business has, together with his body, taken a bit of a pounding. Other strikers have either leapfrogged over him in the jostling for international selection or, in the case of a certain Michael Owen, emerged during his absence.

A frustrated Ferdinand currently finds himself injury-free, which is a bonus judging by the past two seasons, but not a guaranteed starter in the Spurs first team. At the age of 32, some might feel his best days are now past him. The man in question, however, begs to differ.

"Maybe a few years ago that might have been the case, but players have been educated in terms of looking after themselves, and with the right diet, nutrition and exercise regime, I see no reason why I should not be playing at the highest level for a good four or five years," he explains, as we sit in one of the Tottenham dressing-rooms.

"Having the kind of background I've had - coming through relatively late, and with all those manual jobs beforehand - has helped me both as a player and a person. I look around the Tottenham squad today, and there are many youngsters here who only know about football. They just don't seem to be as hungry for it as I believe they should be."

"Some of them might be in for a shock later if things were to go wrong for them in their careers; like injuries, or loss of form. I've never forgotten my days driving a van, steam cleaning or painting. The majority of my family still do those kind of jobs. I appreciate what I have. I've been lucky, and it's because of this that I've been able to come through the past

two and a half years with my confidence intact.

"The experience and memories I have from playing in successful sides - Newcastle, England, and to a lesser extent, QPR - have kept me going. I want to get back to those days. I don't want to have already reached my peak."

Unlike some players I could think of, Ferdinand's refreshing honesty means he does not hide behind any excuses when it comes to his Tottenham career to date. He is more than happy to hold his hands up. "The supporters know what I'm capable of because they've

'Kevin Keegan once described me at Newcastle as a monster who needed to be fed'

seen me produce the goods elsewhere.

"But they haven't seen me do it in a Tottenham shirt and they have every right to reserve their judgement on me until I succeed. People felt 66 was a lot of money for a player of my age, and at this moment you'd have to say, with my record at Spurs, it was too much. But I aim, of course, to change that."

He insists his confidence in his own ability remains high but, like any striker, he needs to start scoring some goals. Kevin Keegan once described me at Newcastle as a monster who needed to be fed. David Ginola and Keith Gillespie are on the wings, and Peter Beardsley behind me used to do the feeding.

Tottenham have obviously struggled in the past two seasons, and any striker will tell you he needs good service in order to score goals. It's been very frustrating. I've sat on

the sidelines, watched a few chances go begging, and heard commentators say: 'If Les Ferdinand had been playing he would have had a field day.' Then I get a chance to play and nothing seems to come my way.

"I've been a 25-goals-a-season man at every club I've played for, except Tottenham. My goals-per-game ratio here has been appalling. Last season I scored five goals. I thought: 'What the hell's going on here?' But I honestly believe it's beginning to look up for me. I've come off the pitch recently and thought that only a goal had been missing from an otherwise good performance. I just need an extended, injury-free run."

For a man with Ferdinand's recent record, an injury-free run might be lot to ask for.

Does he consider himself these days to be one of those players dubbed with the negative tag of "injury-prone"?

"I don't really know," he replies, having given the subject some thought. "I know there are some players lucky enough to have never experienced a major injury, and there are others who never get off the treatment table. I guess it's just the way I play the game. I'm always in the thick of things, and I'm liable to fall awkwardly, or get clattered by a goalie or defender. It's happened too much for my liking though, and I hope that this time I can get on with playing. I've come a long way from the White City Estate and I've achieved a lot, but there's no way I'll be satisfied until I've done myself justice at Spurs."

Coming a long way includes a fifth England career: something of course which Ferdinand finds frustrating to analyse. "Right now, I have no desire to play for England," he admits. "If I start banging in the goals for Tottenham then it might come for me, but I've never felt I was given a fair crack of the whip at international level.

"I always saw myself as a second-choice striker, always on the fringe looking in. Sure, I played a few times, but it was almost always because someone else was injured. I had a bit of a run under Graham Taylor but, like that, I've been in and out. Terry Venables didn't believe a Shearer-Ferdinand partnership could work. Keegan obviously did at Newcastle."

Still things, as Ferdinand

rightly accepts, could be worse. At Tottenham, George Graham is set to be turning the corner for the club. "It's looking like George will be part of the fixtures and fittings here for quite some time," is how Ferdinand puts it. "All the players know he wants to bring new faces in, and we're hoping we're not the ones he wants to replace. We've endured the bad times, so we want to play a part in the good ones we know are not far away."

Like, for example, a cup win at Wembley. This is possible in the FA Cup, where Spurs visit

Leeds in the fifth round, and also in the Worthington Cup, where they are a victory at Wimbledon away from reaching the final. Incredibly, a semi-final is as far as Ferdinand has ever ventured.

"I've never played at Wemb

ley for any club, and never won an English cup," he admits. "I played for Besiktas when they won the Turkish cup, but it's not quite the same, is it? My trophy cabinet contains a few England caps and the 1996 PFA Player of the Year award, of which I am very proud. But there are no win-

ner's medals. There's not a lot to show for what I've done. I'd like to put that straight while I still have the time."

Maybe his chance will come this year. Tottenham's fortunes are beginning to look up under Graham. Ferdinand is hoping the same can be said for him.

Ferdinand, 32 and still eager to succeed: "Having the kind of background I've had has helped me both as a player and a person" Robert Hallam

STRIKERS

GOALS

WINS

LOSS

DEF

HT

United wary of Big Ron Effect

O'Callaghan to lead Celtic into new era

BY GUY HODGSON

YOU DO not need to be a Liverpool supporter to feel the weight of late goals. Chelsea, Aston Villa and Arsenal have also spent the week railing Dwight Yorke's winner at Charlton last Sunday that marked a wind change in the Premiership.

That goal pushed Manchester United to the top for the first time this season apart from the stagger in matches which gave them an advantage for a day. A further victory over Derby in midweek pushed them four points clear and rivals who have spent weeks looking over their shoulders for the anticipated charge from Old Trafford have had to alter their line of vision 180 degrees.

Today United, who are bidding for their fifth title in seven years, travel to Nottingham Forest for a fixture between top and bottom that would have looked a foregone conclusion a matter of weeks ago.

Since the arrival of Ron Atkinson at the City Ground there has been a perceptible lightening of mood, however, and as a former United manager he likes nothing better than putting one over his former employers. As he did last season, when his Sheffield Wednesday side halted what had, until then, seemed to be an unstoppable title bandwagon.

The Big Ron Effect secured only Forest's second win of the season at Everton last Saturday and despite the recent yo-yo record at the City Ground, United have failed to win there in their last four visits.

"There's definitely a positive attitude to a very difficult fixture," Dave Beasant, Forest's

World Cup. You know what Ron's like."

Today is unusual if not unique in that the Premiership's top four all play on Saturday and Chelsea and Villa will be anxious to recover their winning touch after losing last weekend.

Chelsea, whose defeat at Arsenal last Saturday marked the end of a 22-match unbeaten League run, meet a Southampton team whose status as sacrificial lambs had a rapid rewrite when they defeated Leeds comprehensively at the Dell.

Villa, meanwhile, have acquired a ragged edge of late, losing in Second Division Fulham in the FA Cup and to New-

castle last week. Much more of this and John Gregory's image, so pristine it could advertise washing powder, will acquire the first grubby edge. Their opponents are Blackburn, who scored nine goals without reply in the two fixtures between the clubs last season.

With due respect to all the above, the man on whom most attention will focus, however, is Paolo Di Canio. The irascible Italian makes his home debut for West Ham today and with glorious timing the opponents are fourth-placed Arsenal, the very team who pushed him over the limit when he laid hands on referee Paul Alcock in September.

Di Canio has promised not to go volcanic this time, although there was more than one meaning to his attempt to play the meeting down. "I made my mistake against Arsenal," he said, "but it could have been against any other team." Anyone who has managed him will vouch for that.

Harry Redknapp is the new

man with the privilege and he believes that only a lack of fitness will prevent Di Canio proving his doubters wrong.

"People who know the game don't think he's a bad signing," the West Ham manager said. "Andy Gray, Kevin Keegan and Ron Atkinson have all said he's a good signing, so who is it who thinks he isn't? The Press? Well there's no problem is there? I know he's a great player."

Atcock, incidentally, makes his return to the Premiership for the first time since the Di Canio above and, of course, he has got a low-key match with little at stake to ease him in: Forest versus United.

Middlesbrough have no

problems pinpointing their high

goalkeeper, Frank O'Callaghan

by the completion of Celtic Park to a 60,000 capacity, making it the largest club ground in Britain, with an average attendance of 59,024.

Despite that profits fell by £5.5m from last year due to the signings of Vidar Riseth, Johan Mjallby, Lubomir Moravcik and Mark Viduka, with only Malky Mackay, who went to Norwich for a nominal sum, bringing in a fee. McCann admitted the failure to reach the European Champions League followed by an early Uefa Cup exit was "disappointing", but stressed there were now signs of "a stronger first-team squad".

Celtic will welcome back Jackie McNamara to the fold after a recent knee problem for the Premier League trip to Hearts today, but Craig Burley (groin) and Marc Rieper (toe) remain among the long-term injured.

Hearts should welcome back

	PREMIERSHIP TABLE													
	Home			Away			S-geams fons							
	Pl	Ps	Gd	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Upcoming matches
1 Man Utd	24	47	+25	9	3	32	13	4	5	2	19	13	10	DOVER
2 Chelsea	23	43	+15	7	4	17	6	4	6	2	17	13	10	WORLTHAMPTON
3 Aston Villa	23	43	+13	8	2	22	12	4	5	3	19	10	10	WORLTHAMPTON
4 Arsenal	23	42	+13	7	5	0	16	4	4	4	3	8	7	WORLTHAMPTON
5 Leeds	23	36	+13	7	3	1	28	5	2	6	4	16	13	WEDNESDAY
6 Liverpool	23	35	+16	6	3	2	28	13	4	2	6	16	13	WORLTHAMPTON
7 Wslester	23	35	-4	7	1	18	11	2	4	5	11	22	10	WORLTHAMPTON
8 Derby	24	34	+2	4	5	2	11	9	4	5	4	12	12	DOVER
9 West Ham	23	33	-6	6	3	2	16	14	3	6	6	17	17	LEEDS
10 Middlesbrough	23	32	-4	4	7	1	16	10	3	4	4	16	18	LLPOLD
11 Tottenham	23	30	-2	5	4	2	19	16	2	5	5	10	19	DOVER
12 Leicester	23	30	-2	5	3	3	17	16	2	6	4	11	11	WEDNESDAY
13 Newcastle	23	28	-4	6	2	4	16	15	1	3	5	12	17	DOVER
14 Sheff Wed	23	26	-2	5	3	4	13	7	2	2	7	12	16	LLPOLD
15 Everton	23	24	-2	2	7	3	8	6	3	2	6	10	19	DOVER
16 Coventry	23	23	-9	5	4	3	17	13	1	1	9	6	19	DOVER
17 Blackpool	23	22	-8	5	3	4	14	12	0	4	2	8	18	WEDNESDAY
18 Southampton	23	20	-3	4	2	6	10	21	1	3	7	15	22	DOVER
19 Charlton	23	17	-11	2	4	5	15	13	1	4	7	11	24	DOVER
20 Nottm Forest	23	16	-22	1	6	4	9	13	2	1	9	10	28	DOVER

Weekend guide to the Premiership

MATCH OF THE DAY

Nottm Forest v Man United

Last season: No fixture



ALEX FERGUSON (right) will try to ignore speculation over his future as his table-topping side travel east to take on the table-throwing Forest, who will be trying to do the unlikely and secure a second consecutive win under Ron Atkinson (left).

The Manchester United manager has been linked with the England post vacated by Glenn Hoddle this week, but will be focusing all his attention on the Premiership. Ferguson believes his team will be in for a hard game against Atkinson's men following Forest's victory - their first win for 19 matches - at first relegation candidates Everton last Saturday. "You don't get easy games anywhere, and we are expecting a tough match," Ferguson said yesterday.

Aston Villa v Blackburn

Last season: 0-4

THE BLACKBURN striker Chris Sutton could make a timely return to Premiership action today, given the departure of Glenn Hoddle as England manager. Having fallen out with Hoddle over his repeated selection for the B team, Sutton seemingly now has the chance to rebuild his international career. However, as it will be Sutton's first appearance for over two months, he may have to settle for a place on the bench. Kevin Gallacher faces another month out with a calf injury, Keith Gillespie (ankle) and Nathan Blake (neck) are also injured, while Jeff Keown and Stéphane Henchoz are both suspended. Darren Peacock could be recalled. Aston Villa are missing six players, with Lee Hendrie banned, Stan Collymore still undergoing counselling and central defender Ugo Ehiogu suffering from a fractured eye socket. Midfielders Alan Thompson and Mark Draper are recovering from ankle injuries and goalkeeper Mark Bosnich is still battling to shake off a shoulder problem. There is good news for Villa, though, with Dion Dublin available again after injury. Simon Grayson could make a rare appearance in midfield.

ASTON VILLA (from): Caines, Watson, Scimeca, Southgate, Barry, Wright, Taylor, Merson, Grayson, Dublin, Joachim, Hughes, Ferraresi, Vassell, Lee, Rachel. **BLACKBURN ROVERS** (from): Flan, Dawson, Brookes, Peacock, Taylor, Duff, Dunn, McAtee, McElroy, Wilcox, Ward, Jansen, Davies, Sutton, Flowers, Croft, Dall, G. Marcon. **Suspensions:** Aston Villa: Hendrie. Blackburn: Keena, Henchoz. **Referee:** K Burke (Tottenham).

Chelsea v Southampton

Last season: 4-2

CHELSEA'S SPANIARD Albert Ferrer (calf) is doubtful. Fellow defender Bernard Lambourde will definitely miss the game with a groin problem but Michael Duberry is back in contention after being injured at Arsenal last weekend. Gianluca Vialli must decide whether to restore himself up front alongside Gianfranco Zola or keep the teenage striker Mikel Russel in the line-up after his two goals against Oxford in midweek.

Southampton's new signing, Chris Marsden, is likely to make his debut. Marsden, who completed his £800,000 move from Birmingham at the start of the week, is in contention as Matt Le Tissier is expected to be out for a month after tearing a hamstring during the 3-0 win against Leeds last week. Mark Hughes (heel) is expected to recover in time to face his old side and winger Stuart Ripley should be fit after a calf problem. Defender Scott Marshall is out with a stomach bug. Defender Richard Dryden is out for three weeks with an ankle injury. Francis Benali is still two weeks away from returning from a broken arm, and David Hirst and John Beresford are out with long-term knee injuries.

CHELSEA (from): De Gea, Heskey, Leboeuf, Babayaro, Desailly, La Saux, Ferri, Puel, Myhill, Di Matteo, Wise, Goldbeck, Newton, Nicholls, Morris, Terry, Pearce, Vuill, 2001, Forster. **SUSPENSIONS:** Southampton: Marsden, Hughes, Oakley, Beattie, Ostenstad, Ripley, Monk, Bridge, Howells, Warm, Stengard. **Referee:** R Harris.

Leeds v Newcastle United

Last season: 4-1

BOTH SIDES enter today's match with injury problems affecting their line-ups. The Leeds manager, David O'Leary, is denied the services of Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink through suspension, and Stephen McPhail and Bruno Ribeiro with injury, who are this week's most notable absences from a first-team squad decimated by injury in recent months. Jimmy's fellow Dutchman, Clyde Wijnbrand, could earn a rare start up front alongside the 18-year-old Alan Smith, while new signing Willem Korsten could also appear in an attacking role.

Newcastle must do without the services of the England captain, Alan Shearer, who is suspended for the first time in his career. Also missing for the same reason is Nikos Dabizas, and the new French defender Didier Domi is unlikely to play because of a hamstring injury. Rob Lee, who could have played his last match for the Magpies after speculation linking him with a move back to London, has Achilles tendon trouble, but Laurent Charvet, Andy Griffin and on-loan Milan striker Louis Saha are all in the squad after recovering from knocks.

LEEDS UNITED (from): Moray, Holland, Webster, Wetherall, Konstan, Weyward, Dow, Bowyer, Hopkins, Granville, Hall, Kewell, Harre, Woodgate, Jackson, Smith, Robinson. **NEWCASTLE UNITED** (from): Green, Harper, Barron, Griffin, Charles, Howe, Hughes, Hamann, Speed, Glass, Solano, Brady, Georgiou, Kestoba, Anderson, Saha. **Suspensions:** Leeds: Horsfallbank. Newcastle: Shearer, Dabizas. **Referee:** U Reilly (Sheffield).

Leicester v Sheff Wed

Last season: 1-1

LEICESTER'S NEW £2m Icelandic international signing from Bolton, Arnar Gunnlaugsson, joins the squad immediately. If Emile Heskey does not pass a late fitness test on a groin injury, the ice man may make his home debut. Neil Lennon returns from suspension while Frank Sinclair and Muzzy Izzet have recovered from the injuries that kept them out at Middeborough last week. Should the Foxes win today, it will complete their first seasonal League double over the Owls since 1970-71.

Sheffield Wednesday's results have begun to show an improvement in recent weeks, and their manager, Danny Wilson, has virtually a full squad to choose from for today's trip down the M1. With the exception of two long-term absences with knee injuries, Earl Barrett and Ian Nolan, Wilson has no further problems, with midfielder Danny Sonnen available again. Wednesday are still hoping to have their goalkeeper Pavel Srnicek's three-match ban, for his sending-off against Derby last week, commuted to one game. He plays for the last time before suspension today.

LEICESTER CITY (from): Keele, Appleton, Gwynne, Sinclair, White, Ellott, Utashorne, Turgar, Kaarmal, Impey, Zazou, Sodje, Campbell, Parker, Izett, Lennon, Heskey, Coffey, Wilson. **SUSPENSIONS:** Leicester: Barrett, Sonnen, Wilson, Emerson, Rudd, Alexander, Sonner, Morrison, Pressman. **Referee:** G Willord.

...And statistics

Is it worth the wait for goals?

CHELSEA, MORE than anyone, know all about "the game of two halves", not least the dying minutes of the second period. Gianluca Vialli's players have scored 11 times this season in the last 15 minutes. On four occasions their last goal has been bagged in the 90th minute and on a further six occasions it has come in the last 10 minutes. Tore Andre Flo, with five goals in the last 15 minutes of games, is the Blues' 'last gasp' master. Such 'last gasp' has added 14 points to Chelsea's season.

Manchester United's Dwight Yorke is not a bad second-half stayer himself. It was an 89th-minute Yorke header

that took Manchester United back to the summit against Charlton last weekend and another Yorke second-half strike on Wednesday against Derby that stretched their lead to four points. Yorke's strength at the start is telling too - he's scored four times this season in the opening 15 minutes of League games.

Of the 566 goals scored in the top flight this season, 238 have come in the first 45 minutes and 328 (a rather significant 90 more) have come after half-time.

Nearly twice as many goals are timed in the last 15 minutes of a game as the first 15 and, even allowing for time added on, the

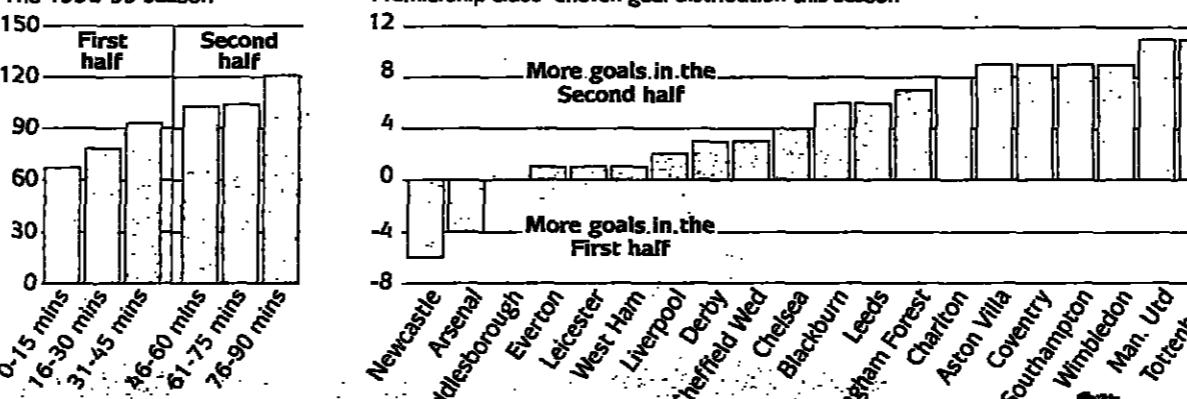
build-up in goal scoring remains significant.

Alex Ferguson's side have now scored 31 of their 51 goals in the second half. Newcastle and Arsenal score more of their goals in the first half. It should have been no surprise to the Gunners' fans that the crucial Dennis Bergkamp goal against Chelsea last weekend came as early as the 32nd minute. Chelsea fans might well have been surprised that their team, on this occasion, failed to manage a last-gasp strike. At the other end of the game it's Newcastle who lead the way with early goals - a quarter of theirs have come in the first 15 minutes.

Goals worth waiting for

The late late bias

Premiership clubs' uneven goal distribution this season



Last-gasp goals

Team	Goals timed after 75 mins	Total goals	Last-gasp %
Chelsea	11	34	32
Charlton	8	26	31
Leicester	7	25	28
Wimbledon	8	29	26
Sheff Wed	6	23	25
Leeds	8	36	22
Middlesbrough	7	32	22
Newcastle	6	28	21
Arsenal	5	24	21
Liverpool	9	44	20
Aston Villa	7	35	20
Man Utd	10	51	20
Blackburn	4	22	18
Tottenham	5	29	17
West Ham	4	25	16
Nott Forest	3	19	15
Coventry	3	23	13
Derby	3	23	13
Everton	1	13	8
Total	121	566	21

Early strikes

Team	Goals timed in first 15 mins	Total goals	Early strike %
Newcastle	7	28	25
West Ham	6	25	24
Coventry	4	23	17
Arsenal	4	24	17
Sheff Wed	4	25	16
Aston Villa	5	35	14
Blackburn	3	22	14
Derby	3	23	13
Southampton	3	23	13
Charlton	3	26	12
Tottenham	3	29	10
Wimbledon	5	51	10
Liverpool	4	44	9
Chelsea	3	34	9
Leicester	2	25	8
Middlesbrough	2	32	6
Leeds	2	36	6
Nott Forest	1	19	5
Everton	0	13	0
Total	67	566	12

Statistics: Brian Sears / Nick Hams

Chelsea's late eleven

21/9/98	Blackburn	3	Chelsea	4	(Flo 82 & 86)
26/9/98	Charlton	2	Middlesbrou	0	(Zola 82)
17/10/98	Chelsea	2	Charlton	1	(Poyle 88)
8/11/98	West Ham	1	Chelsea	1	(Babyaro 76)
21/11/98	Leicester	2	Chelsea	4	(Zola 90)
9/12/98	Chelsea	2	Aston Villa	1	(Flo 90)
16/12/98	Man Utd	1	Chelsea	1	(Flo 83)
19/12/98	Chelsea	2	Tottenham	0	(Poyle 80, Flo 90)
16/12/99	Chelsea	2	Coventry	1	(Di Matteo 90)

Strikers who start well

(Goals in first 15 minutes of League games)

Dwight Yorke

Strikers who 'finish' well

(Goals in final 15 minutes of League games)

Tore Andre Flo

Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink

Tony Cottee

Marcus Gayle

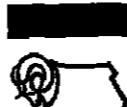
Clive Mendonca

Referee: G Poli

TOMORROW 4 PM

Derby County v Everton

Last season: 3-1



DERBY'S JAMAICAN striker Dean Burton could be recalled against Everton tomorrow. Burton had a positive effect when he replaced Kevin Harper at Old Trafford on Wednesday and, with Dean Sturridge doubtful with a hamstring strain, could partner Paul Wanchope up front. The Rams' Italian duo Stefano Erace and Francesco Belotti could also be recalled by manager Jim Smith. The home side will be looking to improve upon a poor recent record of having scored only six goals in their last 10 home matches. The Merseysiders have only lost twice in their last 12 visits to Derby, but will be without the suspended Danny Cadamari-

teri and Marco Materazzi for the trip to Pride Park. Walter Smith will also be without striker Michael Branch, and the former Derby defender Craig Short who are both out through injury. John Collins, Alex Cleland and Steven Elkin remain long-term absentees. Everton have gone six League games without a victory, scoring just two goals. They have gone five hours and 29 minutes without a goal, but if there is any grain of hope to grasp as they travel tomorrow it is that they have found the net four times in their last seven Premiership away matches, which is a rate above their overall average this season.

They need a rapid improvement to avoid yet another fight against relegation and manager Smith is expected to put Don Hutchison up front with 18-year-old England Youth striker Francis Jeffers on the bench. Olivier Dacourt and Ibrahima Bakayoko are expected to start after being named as substitutes for last week's 1-0 home defeat by Nottingham Forest. Derby's other subs are Steve Lawrence, Carlisle, Powell, Bonthen, Dorogo, Barron, Edwards,

SPORT

ARSENAL'S FRENCH SOURCE P22 • BORN-AGAIN FERDINAND P30

Five Nations' Championship: Lansdowne Road prepares for France side in search of third successive Grand Slam

Ireland stoke fires of self-belief

SWAMPED BY their own past and saturated in memory, the Irish love nothing better than a historical date or two to stoke the fires of debate. Here, then, are some dates they might like to consider as they stroll, bale and hearty and full of confidence, towards Lansdowne Road this afternoon.

Ireland's 15 good men and true last won a Grand Slam in 1948 and claimed their most recent Five Nations title and Triple Crown a small matter of 14 years ago. They have not beaten the French since 1983, have not avoided defeat by them since 1985 and have lost their last 10 opening Championship matches. Reasons to be cheerful? On second thoughts, forget the rugby and crack on with the drinking.

If there is an unmistakable crackle of optimism in Dublin this weekend, it has no obvious basis in fact or logic. As Donal Lenihan, who packed down alongside Moss Keane and Willie Duggan and Fergus Slattery on that famous afternoon in '83, said yesterday: "People seem to forget that France are going for their third successive Slam. That, in itself, will make them desperately hard to beat." As a player, Donal would have been thumping the tub with the best of them. Now, as team

BY CHRIS HEWETT
in Dublin

manager, it was in his interests to rein in the wilder expectations rather than excite them.

Ulster's tearfully romantic European Cup victory last weekend certainly raised Irish spirits in advance of this last Five Nations jamboree, but their successful strangulation of a less than complete and wholly off-colour Colomiers side was not really so much to write home about. Similar tactics this afternoon – well, it's up in the air; run like the clappers.

INSIDE

Chris Hewett on the art of Allan Bederman
Scotland-Wales preview,
Page 23

and bell the first Frenchman who goes within a country kilometre of the descending ball – might rally the 49,000 crowd for 20 minutes or so, but would ultimately condemn Paddy Johns' side to a 14th consecutive defeat at the hands of the urbane *Tricolores*.

Mick Doyle, that garrulous man of Blackrock (not to mention University College Dublin and Cambridge) could be heard yesterday extolling the virtues to quite the same degree.

As for the kicking, Ireland will have only themselves to blame if David Humphreys' occasion marksmanship lets them down. They should, quite clearly, have picked the ultra-dependable Niall Woods for the senior side rather than the A team; not only would he have popped over the three-pointers in his sleep, but he would have joined Conor O'Shea and Justin Bishop in bringing London Irish's exhilarating three-pronged attacking partnership to bear on a French side unfamiliar with the sight of emerald-shirted three-quarters running with the ball rather than shoeing the leather off it.

The likelihood must be that Magne, Philippe Benetton and

the calmly creative Thomas Lièvremont will govern the loose exchanges and allow Philippe Carboneau and Thomas Castaignede to organise things to the French benefit. Castaignede, the

cheeky chappie from Castres whose youthful grin manages to make Arwel Thomas look like Old Father Time, had been conspicuous by his absence since he contributed 14 points and a mountain of instinctive

swagger to his country's Test victory over Fiji in Suva last June. Last weekend the stand-off, fully recovered from his shoulder surgery, swanned back into the reckoning by giving Italy an equal amount of

grief in Genoa. It does not seem fair, somehow.

When Doyle coached Ireland to the title 14 years ago – their 15-15 draw with France denied them a Slam – his players chipped in £25 apiece to buy in

some advice from a professional nutritionist. Today, they have psychologists, physiotherapists and personal masseuses, as well as dieticians. Will the army of support staff help them go one better than in '85? Probably not.

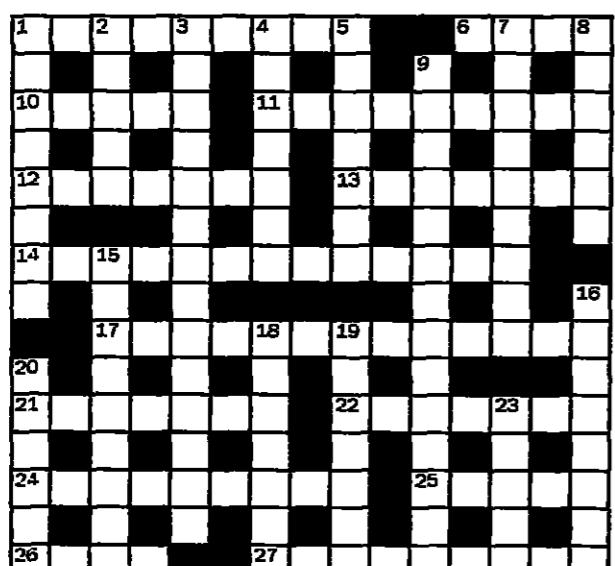
IRELAND v FRANCE		
at Lansdowne Road		
C O'Shea	London Irish	15 E Ntamack Toulouse
J Bishop	London Irish	14 P Bernat-Salles Bayonne
J Bell	Dungannon	13 R Dourthe Stade Français
K Mags	Bath	12 F Comba Stade Français
G Dempsey	Terenure	11 T Lombard Stade Français
D Humphreys	Dungannon	10 T Castaignede Castres
C McGuinness	St Mary's Col	9 P Carboneau Brive
P Clohessy	Young Munster	8 C Califano Toulouse
K Wood	Harlequins	7 R Ibanez Perpignan, capt
P Wallace	Saracens	3 F Tournare Toulouse
P Johns	Saracens, capt	4 O Brouzet Béziers-Bordeaux
J Davidson	Castres	5 F Pelous Toulouse
E Miller	Terenure	6 P Benetton Agen
D Cuthneaguin	Sale	7 O Magne Brive
V Costello	St Mary's Col	8 T Lièvremont Perpignan
Replacements: 16 R Henderson (Wasps), 17 F Woodward (Lancaster), 18 C Solly (LCCU), 19 T Brennan (St Mary's Col), 20 M Galwey (Shannon), 21 J Repando (Dungannon), 22 R Nedovic (Harlequins).		
Referee: P Marshall (Australia)		
Kick-off: 2.15 (BBC1)		

THE SATURDAY CROSSWORD

No.3839 Saturday 6 February

by Mass

ACROSS



Friday's solution

Last Saturday's solution

BOWL	CLUBLAND	SCREAM
A H E U L I E B C	O G O S A	PUNCTURES CALVIN
STEALING UP THE SHOW	A S H I M N O E	LAURENCE OLIVIER
E A E M E N O N	L S A N U V	CASSINETTE MOIRA
BATHCHAIR HERD	C A S S I E	Y U Y I
A L T K A E H R	B R E A M D O C K T A I L	L B R E A M
LUCERNE LOITER	A R A I N G O	CHARLES ISIAH DAUGHTON
L C E U R I N A N Z	K N V I T I N H E D	K N V I T I N H E D
PLACID CROFTLE	O R G I E S I G N O R A Y	ORGIES IGNORANT
L G E U R I H A	F E R E R E S	F E R E R E S
LULU APPRAISAL	F I L I N G F R A N C I S	FILING FRANCIS
A L I D U I N U O		
ROOMY SWINGACAT		
E I A E B E R H		
SUGERLAND LEVY		

Lloyds TSB Five Nations Championship
England v Scotland
Saturday 20 February 1999

SEAT
12
ROW

DOWN

- 1 Puritan finds Paris and Nice disreputable (9)
- 6 Thought facing should be removed - had crack? (4)
- 10 Sign of decay, losing fragment of canine (5)
- 11 Forerunner of the "Big Bang" (9)
- 12 Deal in automobiles (7)
- 13 These could put mannequins in the shade (7)
- 14 Sinful, led astray, fellow's greedy (4-9)
- 17 A bookmaker excluding a backing system? (8-5)
- 21 Bone forming rigid Greek character's back? (7)
- 22 Wavering light produced by good painter, it's said? (7)
- 24 Great amount of water? Valid, maybe, for this (5,4)
- 25 Trendy big house of a S. American ruler (5)
- 26 File play void of Pawn (4)
- 27 Pool note, surrounded by scree of granite (9)

The first five correct solutions to this week's puzzle opened next Thursday receive hardback copies of the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations. Send solutions to Saturday Crossword, P.O. Box 4019, London E14 5HL. Please use the box number and postcode and give your own postcode. Last week's winners: F Hilton, West Bridgford; R Mitchell, Southampton; M Nuttall, Stockport; P Wood, Trodgar; J Kay, Birkenhead.

Wenger's England advice

FOOTBALL

By BILL PIERCE

and people identify better with a guy from their own country. For me it would be difficult to explain to somebody why a country of 50 million people cannot find one in their own right."

His comments were in direct contrast to those of David Sheepshanks, a leading member of the FA committee who will select the new man.

Sheepshanks yesterday refused to rule out a foreign coach for the job, saying that England would go for the best person available.

Meanwhile Wenger, the overseas manager with the most successful record in England,

said he believes the Football Association's next choice to pick up what many regard as a poisoned chalice, must be experienced, aged over 50 – and an Englishman.

"I personally think England must have an English manager because it is a big country with a big passion for football

leading member of the FA international sub-committee charged with drawing up a shortlist, would prefer to appoint an English-born manager but added: "I believe that we should not unnecessarily restrict ourselves from selecting from all of the highest calibre of candidates."

Tim Flowers has shocked Blackburn Rovers by asking for a transfer – to put Aston Villa on red alert for his signature.

Flowers broke the surprise news on the eve of Blackburn's trip to Villa, an ironic and possibly significant piece of timing. Villa will lose Marc Bosnich in the summer when he can walk out for nothing and Flowers is one of the names at the top of their wanted list.

Meanwhile Sheepshanks, the Ipswich chairman who has been talked about as a future chairman of the FA, has declared that non-English managers should be considered among the candidates.

Sheepshanks, who will be a

sitting on my backside. The boss was fully in agreement with that. We've not had a row and this is nothing financial. It's just a matter of wanting a game."

Rovers would want around £2.5m for a keeper who was once Britain's most expensive when he signed during Kenny Dalglish's reign.

Meanwhile, John Gregory has admitted he is not bothered whether or not Stan Collymore returns to Aston Villa. He added: "If he comes back and gets his head down and gets on with his job and does enough to justify him being in the team, he will play. There is no problem. But I do not want to talk any more about Stan Collymore."

The Croatian international Silvio Maric arrived on Tyneside yesterday to complete his £3.5m move to Newcastle.

Lawrie Sanchez, the former Wimbledon player, was last night named manager of Second Division Wycombe.

David Davies profile

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WEEKEND REVIEW

COMMENT • ARTS & BOOKS • COUNTRY & GARDEN • TRAVEL

**DEA BIRKETT
JOINS
THE CIRCUS**

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**THE TROUBLE
WITH
ERICA JONG**

BOOKS, PAGE 15

**THE TOP 10
PLANTS
IN PERIL**

GARDEN, PAGE 17

**YAM, BAM:
A GOURMET
IN JAMAICA**

TRAVEL, PAGE 19



Brian Morris

The long goodbye

Simon Dee was once the biggest star on British TV – a Sixties Chris Evans with style. Then things began to slide. MI5 tapped his phone. A cartel of Swiss bankers stole his designs for the Millennium Dome. And as for David Frost...

Boris Yeltsin's grandson and TV's Philippa Forrester are Winchester's only famous residents, according to a local taxi driver called Dave. "What about Simon Dee? 'I ain't never heard of him,' says Dave. In media circles, people had been only slightly more clued up when I told them I was going to Winchester to meet Simon Dee. "God, I thought he was dead," said one. "Didn't he emigrate to New Zealand, or was that the Galloping Gourmet?" said another. "Ah," said a third. "Simon Dee, the locus classicus of the where-are-they-now? feature." When I reported this exchange, my wife was terribly impressed with the term *locus classicus*. "You must drop that into your article," she said. "But make sure we use it in the right context. Don't say that Simon Dee pulled up in his *Locus Classicus*."

Far from it, as it turns out, Simon Dee is skint. Worse, he is skint and unknown. Imagine if, in 2029, Chris Evans is found living anonymously in a small terraced house in deepest Hampshire. It would represent much the same 30-year fall down the rickety ladder of fortune. For in 1969, tall, toothy Simon Dee, host of the BBC's hit chat-and-music show *Dee Time*, was as big a star as there was on television.

We meet at Winchester's posh Hotel du Vin. He is still tall and toothy and, physically at least, the years have treated him fairly charitably. Later this year he will be 64. "Will you still need me, will you still feed me, when I'm 64?" Lennon and McCartney's words have acquired a poignant ring for a fellow golden boy of the Sixties.

Until 1964 he was called Nicholas Henry-Dodd. He was from a well-to-do Lancashire family and went to Shrewsbury School at around the same time as Michael Heseltine and Richard Ingrams. John Peel was there a little later and, of the broadcasters whose careers not only survived the Sixties but continued to thrive, Peel is one of the few for whom Dee admits a grudging admiration.

His own rise to fame began with Radio Caroline, the pirate radio station set up off the coast of Ireland on a retired Baltic ferry. Radio

Caroline's founder was an ebullient Irishman, Ronan O'Rahilly, whose first recruit was his old drama school pal Henry-Dodd. But Henry-Dodd was no name for a pirate. So he combined his young son's name with the initial letter of Dodd to become Simon Dee.

In the Hotel du Vin – between mock-humble protestations that "it's all so very, very long ago"

– Dee enthusiastically recalls the troubled launch of Radio Caroline. "We had to test the signal before we left the anchorage, so we played Ray Charles singing 'Round Midnight' as a test signal. All seemed to be well, but unknown to us we hadn't quite arranged the signals correctly, and on every radio and TV set within a 50-mile radius, Ray Charles suddenly interrupted the main evening news. In Dublin, everyone was crying 'My God, what's going on?' and no wonder because Ray Charles on a Hammond organ was saturating the news."

Dee roars with laughter. He is very half-fellow-

BY BRIAN VAINER

well-met, joshing loudly with the waitress and later rumbustiously defying her request not to smoke a cigar at the table. But for all the bluster, it is hard not to feel sorry for him. In 1970, following a falling-out with his then-employers London Weekend Television, he took a sabbatical. "I thought, 'I'll have a rest now and take a year off.' It became two years off, then five years, then 10 years, then 20 years, then 30 years off." Again, he roars with laughter. But not, I reckon, because he thinks it's funny.

A few weeks ago, Dee wrote to Mike Leggo, BBC TV's head of light entertainment, listing all the guests he interviewed between 1967 and 1970, and suggesting that he meet them again to ask them "if their dreams came true". He would, of course, need a medium to make contact with many of them. But he sees no reason why he shouldn't make a comeback. "After all, if a racing driver stops racing for 20 or 30 years then gets back in the car, he will soon get it together. The control and co-ordination will still be there." Mike Leggo evidently does not agree. He has not replied.

But let us again wind back the years to Dee's strange sacking from Radio Caroline. "We finally anchored off the coast of Suffolk," he recalls. "One day I was doing *Sunday Puddings* when the technician on the other side of the glass collapsed. I found him on the floor, dying. I went to the microphone and asked for someone to send a boat. Within an hour there must have been 20 rowing boats, yachts, catamarans, and the local lifeboat. The captain later called me to the bridge and said, 'By calling for assistance, you have mutinied. Get off my ship!'

Dee was promptly fired by BBC Radio, but owed his big television break to the mother of Bill Cotton, one of the most illustrious of Leggo's predecessors as head of BBC light entertainment. As Dee tells it, Mrs Cotton – wife of the band leader Billy – saw him on the box advertising Smiths Crisps, liked what she saw, and recommended him to her son. Surprisingly, Bill Cotton confirms this.

"I think my initial reaction was 'you do the cooking, let me spot the talent'. But on the way home I realised that my mother had seen more performers than I had, and that I ought to take her seriously. So we started *Dee Time*. He was quite difficult in that first year because it went to his head. But by the second year there's no doubt that he was one of the most powerful people on television. He had great influence on the young."

This influence was channelled partly through the *Dee Code*, a 1968 version of the Ten Commandments. Youngsters were asked to write in endorsing the *Dee Code* and, in return, were sent a weekly letter signed by Dee, which amounted to a lecture in moral rectitude.

Todays letters make arresting reading. On the subject of race relations, for instance, one said: "An intelligent being from outer space might easily decide that the only species of mankind worth preserving was the one with the dark brown skin, the lustrous eyes, sculpted lips and natural grace in movement, and that all those other pallid, thin-lipped, pale-eyed, lank-haired creatures should be painlessly annihilated before they reduced the physical beauty of humanity any further. Think about this, especially when next you hear someone make disparaging remarks about our coloured fellow-citizens."

These were worthy enough sentiments, yet not everyone approved of the *Dee Code*. In the *Daily Mail*, Dee was criticised for "getting too big for his with-it boots". But still his career seemed glided, especially when *Dee Time* replaced the ailing *Juke Box Jury* in the all-important Saturday early evening slot. For Dee, life got better and better. He drove an Aston Martin. At a glitzy party, he danced with Princess Margaret. And no star – not John Lennon, nor Charlton Heston, nor Michael Caine – was too big to appear on his show. Thanks to Caine, he even landed a part in *The Italian Job*. "Mike had been on the show and thought he'd do me a favour: I played a poofy Savile Row tailor, and I was so good that poofs started chasing me." This time he laughs so hard that a couple two tables away joins in.

In 1970, Dee was poached by LWT, reportedly

Continued on page 2



Simon Dee in his Sixties pomp; and at home in Winchester today (top)

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NINE PAGES OF
TRAVEL

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TOMORROW IN
THE INDEPENDENT
ON SUNDAY

CULTURE



Going home: the final work by the late Brian Moore

REAL LIFE



What happens when a Hollywood career turns sour? Suzanna Leigh tells the truth



No more cover girls: is this the end of the supermodel?

REVIEW



How the Lonely Planet put an end to lonely travel

PLUS

Jeremy Paxman's diary



Independent Eye No 6: Fear in Sarajevo at the sound of a sniper's shot, 1993. From 'An Independent Eye: A Century of Photographs' (Sutton, £20)

Tom Pilston

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Post letters to Letters to the Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, London E14 5DL and include a daytime telephone number, fax to 0171 293 2050 or e-mail to letters@independent.co.uk (e-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address). Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Insult to teachers

Sir: I was seriously considering a teaching career until now.

I am a 28-year-old arts graduate with two degrees. For the past five years I have taught English as a foreign language in private language schools. This experience with primary school children made me think about returning to England and contributing to the education of British children.

I had thought that my 11 O-levels, including maths, physics and chemistry, would be more than adequate for placement on a post-graduate certificate of education course. I had of course expected some training in education, child psychology, teaching methods and so on. I was also quite prepared for a loss of status and lower wages. However, I do not intend to sit remedial maths exams, or to pore through A-level maths books ("All teachers must take maths test", 4 February). Mr Blunkett's latest plans are an insult to my intelligence and training.

No, Mr Blunkett, I will not be returning to England to become a primary school teacher. However, there are a few thousand unemployed maths teachers here in Greece. Do you think that if I teach them adequate English they could come and fill the gap? Perhaps, they could contribute to the foreign language skills of schoolchildren, too!

MARINA ROBB

Athens

Sir: It is of little surprise that most teachers could not explain the origin of the words "chortle" and "dosh" ("All teachers must take maths test", 4 February). To know that Lewis Carroll invented the former and that the origin of the latter is unknown would demonstrate at best a breadth of general knowledge, not competence in the teaching of grammar. However, should better trained teachers therefore receive more dosh, then all, I am sure, would chortle.

IAN MAGGS

Heslham, Northumberland

Marriage rethink

Sir: All peoples, not only Judeo-Christians, have believed that marriage has a sacred character ("There should be nothing holy about matrimony", 30 January).

Jo Ind claims Christianity "got it wrong" when the Church in the 13th century declared it a sacrament".

The Church in east and west always taught in that vein but the western Church actually clarified its meaning, notably in the 13th and 16th centuries.

Consequently, Jo's claim that "it is an institution made by man none the less" gained relatively little credence until modern times. Most of us could agree that "we need to rethink marriage". Unlike Christians, Jo Ind may have in mind something other than the union of one man with one woman for life.

Rather than tamper with a gift of God, Christians' rethinking seeks to make marriage work by identifying the obstacles peculiar to each age.

The Churches did not criticise the Birmingham radio station's publicity stunt because it was an arranged marriage. The closest and most loving partnership I have known began as an Irish arranged Catholic marriage in 1933. Like Indian arranged marriages I later encountered, it depended on support from shared beliefs, an extended family and a close-knit community, which the Birmingham couple will not enjoy.

HUGH LINDSAY

Grange-over-Sands, Cumbria

The writer was Roman Catholic Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle 1974-1992

Nuclear terrorism

Sir: It appears that the Government is about to undermine much of its early good work on trying to establish a rational and practical policy on the future of the nuclear industry. The announcement on 18 January by John Battle, the Energy Secretary, that plutonium is to be shipped from Sellafield to Japan in the form of MOX (mixed oxide) fuel is uncomfortable with the Environment Agency's October 1990 report on the Sellafield MOX Plant (SMP).

Our concern about nuclear proliferation seemed to have been accepted by the Environment Agency in the conclusion that "separated plutonium is generally described as weapons-grade or civil grade. For most practical purposes the grade does not affect the arguments concerning weapons proliferation".

They further state that "it would be a relatively straightforward matter to undertake chemical separation of plutonium from MOX fuel. It is debatable how easy it would then be to assemble the plutonium into a crude nuclear device capable of exploding. However, a terrorist group would arguably be able to

exercise considerable power by merely threatening to explode such a weapon".

Following two periods of public consultation and comment on BNFL's application to commission the SMP and the Environment Agency's report to government, which has not elicited any formal announcement, is it not premature to talk of arrangements for shipping MOX fuel to a country which is undecided about the questionable merits of burning it in conventional reactors?

We urge the Government to declare that it will not permit BNFL's ships to leave Barrow-in-Furness docks.

MARTIN FORWOOD

Cumbrians Opposed to a Radioactive Environment

PAD GREEN

Friends of the Earth

Clr MARTIN HEMINGWAY

Nuclear Free Local Authorities

DAVE KNIGHT

Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

PAUL LEVENTHAL

Nuclear Control Institute

Washington DC

PETE ROCHE

Greenpeace UK

MIKE TOWNSLEY

Greenpeace International

Penrith, Cumbria

Worthless verse

Sir: May I add a word of support to the Oxford University Press in their decision to junk their poetry list. I have spent most of my working life in and around poetry and I have noticed that increasingly poets do not feel any sense of worth unless their work is published. It is like a fetish and does not diminish with age. Unfortunately most poems are worthless and to publish them is madness.

Such fragile reputations as OUP's former poets enjoy are mainly due to promotion through their own incestuous groups. Certainly no one else is in the least bit interested in their work, as sales figures show.

The Greek master Cavafy never bothered with publishers. He made lots of copies of his poems, held them together with a paper clip and sent them to his friends. I recommend it.

BARRY FANTOMI

London SW4

Merchants of misery

Sir: You mention the role of arms dealing in fuelling wars in Africa, and yet at the same time they are giving the go-ahead to measures that enable genetically engineered foodstuffs to enter the food chain. Surely one brush with unnatural practices in respect of foodstuffs might ring a few alarm bells somewhere. Why is the press not giving the Government a much harder time over this issue?

SIMON FIELD

Broadstone, Dorset

virtually anywhere in the world has to be curtailed. If the weapons do not touch EU soil, they are not subject to EU export controls.

During its presidency of the EU, the German government is expected to propose that transfers brokered through third countries by EU-based companies are subject to the same restrictions as weapons exported directly from the EU. These proposals should be supported by the UK government, which only tends to control brokering of arms and embargoed transfers of torture equipment, anti-personnel mines and long-range missiles to other countries.

Welcome as the UK steps are, they ignore the fact that many brokered arms deals involve exports of light weapons - machine guns, rifles and mortars - to countries in conflict regions but not subject to any embargo. With 46 out of the 49 conflicts since 1990 being fought with small arms, such an omission is a crucial mistake.

LAN DAVIS

Arms Trade Programme,

SafeWorld

London WC1

IN BRIEF

Sir: My dictionary has a different definition to that suggested by one of your correspondents (letter, 5 February):

Hoddle, v.i. As the holder of a high-profile job whose utterances are likely to be widely reported, to open mouth without engaging brain and make comments which render that job difficult or impossible to perform.

The Manchester edition of my dictionary also includes this entry under "Anderson, vi."

PHILIP GOLDENBERG

Woking, Surrey

Sir: The Government is spectacularly inconsistent over food safety. They are over-cautious in respect of selling beef on the bone and yet at the same time they are giving the go-ahead to measures that enable genetically engineered foodstuffs to enter the food chain. Surely one brush with unnatural practices in respect of foodstuffs might ring a few alarm bells somewhere. Why is the press not giving the Government a much harder time over this issue?

SIMON FIELD

Broadstone, Dorset

Simon Dee: the long goodbye

Continued from page 1
for the fabulous sum of £100,000 a year. The BBC could not match such a salary, but Cotton wasn't too sorry to see him go.

"It had got to the stage where his ideas of his own importance were actually quite damaging," says Cotton. He thought, as a lot of performers do, that he was bigger than the show. A TV executive has to judge when he has to live with that, and when he doesn't. In his case, I didn't want to. By the way, he still got those fantasies about M&S?"

Yes, in a word. As lunch at the Hotel du Vin wears on, it becomes increasingly and uncomfortably clear that Dee has what

appear to be paranoid delusions. In some ways they are understandable. I don't want to trespass on Anthony Clare territory here, but perhaps they are the only way in which he can make sense of the last 30 years of obscurity, following three years in which he was as famous as anyone in the land.

He is convinced, for instance, that he was drummed off television because he opposed Britain's entry into the Common Market. He thinks that the British secret service, and possibly the CIA too, tapped his phone, worried by his interest in the assassination of President Kennedy. Most bizarrely of all, he embarks on a long tale

which ends with him firmly at the centre of an international conspiracy.

To cut it short, he claims that the Moroccan government commissioned him to design a dome for Casablanca. When he delivered the plans, the Moroccans wouldn't pay up, but a posse of Swiss bankers later took him for dinner at the RAC Club in Pall Mall and said they wanted to build his dome for £100 million.

"I left the RAC Club rather happy. 'My God,' I thought. 'I've found another metier.' I wake up the next morning, phone their hotel and they've gone, without leaving any note at all. It was all some vast sting."

By now I can see where this is leading and, sure enough, Dee is certain that he has been denied the recognition he deserves, not to mention the fee, for conceiving the Millennium Dome.

But let us again return to 1970. *The Simon Dee Show* on London Weekend was a flop. Ever since, Dee has held on to the notion that it was sabotaged by David Frost, who had a sizeable shareholding in the company.

"He was in New York when I joined, and wasn't very pleased when he found that his biggest rival had signed to his own network." Certainly, the show was given an unsociable slot. And in due course,

Dee's bubble of fame and fortune burst. How, I wonder, does he feel when he sees David Frost on television now? "I don't see David Frost on television now," he says bitterly.

And what has he done for income for the last 30 years? "I have had no income," he says. "When my father died in 1980 I inherited a vast sum of money but it was taken from me by death duties." Financially, Dee depends on his third wife, a teacher, and spends his days looking after their four-year-old son, Cyril George.

"If you have no money," he adds, "you have to concentrate on friendships. It's not such a bad thing. You have to dwell in

reality." Actually, I don't think that Simon Dee dwells anywhere near reality, but in his boots, I'm not sure I would, either.

Gloria Stewart

In an interview with Paul Johnson by Deborah Ross ("Ginger Spice", 2 November 1998), due to a misunderstanding we misquoted Paul Johnson so as wrongly to suggest that he had accused Gloria Stewart of telling lies. We apologise for this error.

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Do not squander King Hussein's legacy of peace

AS THE West pays its respects to the memory of King Hussein of Jordan, it should pause to acknowledge a conundrum. The King has been a good leader, of his own people and of wider Arab interests in the Middle East. Domestically, his achievement was to hold together the country he inherited from his father, despite the loss of the West Bank and the influx of Palestinian refugees. Internationally, his legacy is to have made peace with Israel, and helped broker more realistic positions by his Arab neighbours in the Middle East peace process.

It is to be hoped that the rather Shakespearean deathbed manoeuvres, dashing at the 11th hour his brother's 33-year expectation of inheriting the crown in favour of his eldest son, Abdullah, will come good. Brother Hassan had a high reputation abroad, especially in Israel where his fluent command of Hebrew and friendship with leading politicians meant he was a known and trusted quantity. Son Abdullah, on the other hand, has a reputation merely as a top soldier. It is assumed that he has learnt political skills from watching his father for the past 37 years, but it is not certain. And it is assumed that, as someone educated in Britain, he shares – or at least understands – the values of liberal democracy, and will thus continue King Hussein's pragmatic and peaceful policy.

It is in the values of liberal democracy that the conundrum lies. Western liberal democrats tend to take it as read that, if the Arab countries were democracies, the prospects of peace in the Middle East would be better. But it could be that it was preferable that an enlightened despot should have ruled Jordan for so long. The danger of democracy in a culture dominated by grievance against external enemies is that it could throw up an Islamic demagogue who would want to fight again the wars of 1967 and 1973 against Israel, or fight the holy war against the American-dominated world order.

Equally, though, it could be argued that it is only by moving towards democracy that the rage of Moslem fundamentalism will be channelled into a constructive engagement with the rest of the world. The evidence from other parts of the globe is unclear. India and Pakistan are both democracies, and that has not stopped a series of "hot" wars, or an escalating "cold" war of nuclear weapons competition. Nor have the excesses of Islamic theocracy been noticeably curbed in Pakistan.

The issue of democracy is not raised by the succession in Jordan alone. Power has been effectively handed down in the house of Fahd in Saudi Arabia, while leaders in Egypt and Syria will be replaced in the next few years. Colonel Gaddafi in Libya is not a well man, while even Saddam Hussein must be approaching his rendezvous with mortality. In that context, King Hussein's limited moves towards a constitutional monarchy should be seen as a welcome attempt to secure power based on popular consent. King Abdullah should be given support to broaden his democratic base.

The best hope for advancing the Middle East peace process, though, lies in a different succession battle later this year. If the Israeli elections replace Benjamin Netanyahu with a leader who can unite the forces committed to peace and dialogue with the Palestinians, which are greater than the forces of hostility, then King Hussein's life work stands a chance of being completed.



A mixed review for this angry young man

GORE VIDAL once said that the only people who enjoy themselves in the theatre are the cast. For much of the time, he is right. Which theatre-goer has not looked at his or her watch or wondered why the seats are so uncomfortable in the middle of a supposedly engrossing and emotional performance? It is not a new observation. John Osborne got himself all worked up about the staid politeness of middle-class life in general and the theatre in particular 40 years ago, and tried to shake it up. Not that *Look Back in Anger* would keep everyone from fiddling with their programme notes.

Steven Berkoff revived the angry spirit with his demand that drama should be "in your face" – to similarly mixed reviews. Now Irvine Welsh, famous for the ambiguous heroin chic of *Trainspotting*, has become the latest angry young person to rail against the suffocating politeness and tedium of British theatre.

He certainly succeeded in shocking the bourgeois: one critic described his new play, *You'll Have Had Your Hole*, as "the most obnoxious and contemptible" that he had ever seen. Indeed, his tale of gangsterism, anal rape, torture and drug-taking would not be to everyone's taste. But there is something rather predictable about Mr Welsh's rant against the elitism of modern theatre. It might have made the pulse race faster in Mr Osborne's

day; now it is easier to dismiss such adolescent posturing as mere publicity-seeking.

But what of the substance of Mr Welsh's complaint that, because theatre is a "posher and older" medium than the cinema, most West End plays are "soporific" and most theatres have a "cricket Test ambience designed to keep a younger, hipper crew away"?

It is true that too much of our theatre is self-satisfied, too many bad plays are put on and too many audiences are prepared to put up with it because they think they are being highbrow. And these are faults that all too few people involved in the theatre will recognise. But there are boring films and books as well. Imagine an author going on a talk show to launch a tirade against Captain Corelli's Mandolin, saying it was silly and pompous and demanding to know who on earth could afford to pay £17.99 for the hardback. He or she would be laughed out of the studio. If you do not like a book, you can stop reading it. If the film is no good, you can go to sleep until it is over or engage in traditional back-row-of-the-movies pastimes. If a rock concert is not as good as the CD you can go and get a drink. But theatre is different. The audience is implicated in the performance. It is trapped. If people are bored, it affects what happens on stage. Whatever a cinema audience does, it does not change what is on the screen.

That is why the audience for a mediocre play feels embarrassed, constrained and annoyed. But that is also why, if a live performance succeeds in "breaking through", it is so much more powerful than a film. The

audience can be swept up in a way that is all the more memorable for not relying on the set changing with every shot, or the special effects, or the fact that the director was able to choose the best of 40 takes. It is precisely the closed-in, inescapable nature of the theatre that makes great drama great.

Sadly, the reality is that there is too much tedious drama staged and, as Mr Welsh says, too little innovation. But to extrapolate from this that "theatre is finished as an art form", a theme that appears in the national press every three months or so, is daft. Because when the theatre is good, it can be sublime. Depending on taste, a good Shakespeare production, a good Andrew Lloyd Webber musical, a good farce, even a good Irvine Welsh play, can stay with you for life in a way nothing else can.

That old chestnut...

JAMES CALLAGHAN, 86, says he does not agree with an age limit of 75 for the new-look House of Lords. He would say that, wouldn't he? But the old buffer is right. The proposal, which ministers are considering, is an embarrassment for Tony Blair, who just this week vouchsafed his opposition to age discrimination in the pages of *Saga Magazine*. If oldies are allowed to drive provided they pass another test, should not MPs, judges and members of the Upper House be allowed to serve, provided they can name the shadow Home Secretary?

Even the smallest gesture from the IRA could salvage peace

I HEAR the sound of distant drums. They are beating in the future – about two months away to be precise. The drums to which I refer are those of Ulster's marching season, the summer months of unrest and irrationality. If the Ulster peace process were working as it should, then there would be less reason to fear the advent of the marching season at Easter. There would be a power-sharing executive of unionists and nationalists sitting in Stormont with shared responsibility for the policing of demonstrations.

Mr David Trimble and Mr Seamus Mallon would be sitting down with the leaders of Sinn Fein and loyalist groups to smooth a path through the dangerous summer months.

But what we have now is an agreement without the apparent will to make it work. Instead the punishment squads – fascists by any other name – batter and brutalise, the IRA and loyalist paramilitaries sit on their arsenals and dissident republicans plot a renewed campaign of terror.

Mo Mowlam's uncharacteristically gloomy expression on television this week was an indication of the precarious state of the process. Be assured that we are in serious trouble. The central assumption of the peace process – that common sense will ultimately prevail – looks less tenable than at any time since the Drumcree stand-off last July.

Consider the largely unreported clashes that have occurred around the Garvagh Road area in the past week or so. Sectarian tension is high in Portadown, and the Drumcree stand-off is again building towards a confrontation. Hardline loyalists, who have long wished for the collapse of the

agreement, see in the latest crisis over decommissioning the chance to drag the Ulster Unionists out of the process. They will again use Drumcree as a focal point of their anger.

That protest collapsed last year only because of the tragic deaths of three young Catholic boys. Had that tragedy not happened, the police and Army would have faced an unprecedented confrontation with loyalist protesters. That in turn would almost certainly have ruined Mr Trimble's chances of persuading the doubters in his own party to stick with the process.

As Drumcree looms once again, Mr Trimble needs all the help he can get. What he wants is to see a start to the decommissioning process.

The question is whether those whom he needs to help him, principally Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness, are either willing or able to deliver. I believe Mr Adams has travelled a long distance to his present position. He has made a journey that has involved the abandonment of armed struggle and the acceptance – so long unthinkable for republicans – of a political settlement within a United Kingdom.

The notion that he would bring his movement that far and then abandon the process for the sake of guns does not tally with what he knows of his pragmatic political approach. It has been suggested that Mr Adams could make an historic compromise and follow the route of another republican leader, Eamon de Valera, who in 1927 agreed to take an oath of allegiance to the King in order to enter the Dail of the new Irish Free State.

But there is a critical historical difference in the circumstances in which both men have operated. When de Valera agreed to take the oath he did

FERGAL KEANE
The peace process is likely to break down unless the republicans compromise on weapons decommissioning

as the leader of a movement that had suffered a resounding military defeat four years before, in the Irish Civil War. The backwash of defeat enabled de Valera to make his historic U-turn. Militarism as a principle had been discredited. Even then, some of de Valera's supporters were said to have attended the Dail with guns secreted on their persons. The issue for today's IRA is that, unlike its forebears in the Irish civil war, it has not been defeated and thus should not be expected to "surrender" its weapons. One of the essential building-blocks of the current settlement is the promise that nobody has been defeated.

Decommissioning of weapons is wrongly seen by republicans as an implicit acceptance of military defeat. And yet that is what the agreement which Sinn Fein (and by implication the IRA) supported now demands. But let us stay with de Valera for a moment. "Dev" was an exceptionally shrewd political operator. While he lacked the passion and charisma of Michael

Collins, he was by far the more wily politician. That is why Dev survived the murderous trauma of the civil war years and Collins did not. Mr Adams knows there are many republican dissidents who would happily send him the way of Collins. And he may feel that he has pulled republicans as far as he can along the road to compromise with Mr Trimble. His concern now is probably as much with keeping the mainstream republican movement together as it is with advancing the peace process.

The brutal attempts of the IRA to keep the dissidents in line – witness the beating of Paddy Fox last week – are the most public sign we have of the battle within republicanism. Now that the Real IRA and Continuity IRA are building up weapons supplies and apparently planning terrorist attacks in Britain, the possibility of a fratricidal feud with the Provisional IRA becomes a serious possibility.

Can the Provos afford a well-armed and militarily aggressive organisation claiming the mantle of the Irish Republican Army? If it did come to a fight the Provos would win, but the cost in terms of lives and political progress could be huge.

For one thing the eruption of a shooting war would force the Government to suspend Sinn Fein's involvement in the peace process by arguing that the IRA was fighting to destroy a dissident threat to the process would be given short shrift.

A bloody feud similar to those we

have seen in the past would be one breach of the Mitchell Principles too far. And how sure could we be that the Provincials and Sinn Fein would be led by the same people who have steered the republican movement

successfully through the past few dangerous years?

I believe David Trimble and Gerry Adams are both brave men. They are creatures of different cultures and traditions thrown together by the demands of peace.

The question now should be how they can help each other. I believe those around Mr Trimble when they say that any compromise on decommissioning by the Ulster Unionist leader would lead to his political demise. That is a fact not political spin. But I also accept that Mr Adams is not in a position to deliver the wholesale decommissioning of IRA weapons. What then is the half-way house that gets both men off the hook and allows this process to move forward?

There must be a symbolic gesture towards decommissioning from the IRA. How they do it, where they do it, what weapons are involved, is a matter they can resolve with the decommissioning body.

I don't believe there will be a large-scale destruction of guns – not while the threat from dissidents and loyalist paramilitaries remains, not while the peace process remains in such a precarious state. But it is not too much to ask that the IRA signals its commitment to the peace process by offering a gesture to the embattled Mr Trimble. It is then up to Mr Trimble to accept that gesture and convince his supporters.

Things are bad, but there is still time and there is still a choice. The IRA must make its choice now: a crucial gesture towards peace or a summer and more of agony.

The writer is a BBC News special correspondent

Kosovo children appeal to Independent readers

Kosovo children refugees in Albania face cold, hunger and disease as winter深寒。Many are in deep shock, having witnessed their parents and relatives killed in the awful atrocities from which they fled. Albania, the poorest country in Europe, has few resources to support the massive influx of refugees.

Your action will help children who have lost everything

The European Children's Trust needs your swift response to set up an emergency centre in Shkodra, northern Albania, to help 2500 refugees. Our centre will provide basic necessities and schooling to give security to the confused and frightened refugee children living in Shkodra. These are children and families whose homes have been lost, perhaps forever.

Special help is needed for the traumatised children who have witnessed terrible crimes, and must now start to live a normal life.

• £30 could buy emergency medicine and food supplements for 5 Kosovar refugee children for a week.

Kosovo Emergency Appeal. The European Children's Trust, FREEPOST KE359, 64 Queen Street, London EC4B 4AB.

Please send what you can to save the displaced Kosovar children this winter. Call 0800 056 3686 now or cut the coupon below.

I enclose £ my choice £ to save Kosovar children. (Cheques to The European Children's Trust please.)

Or debit my Access/Visa/CAF card:

Card no. Expiry date

Signature Date

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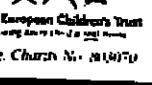
Address Postcode

Telephone no.

Please return to: Tanya Barron, (IWA), Kosovo Emergency Appeal, FREEPOST KE359, 64 Queen Street, London EC4B 4AB.

Or call 0800 056 3686 NOW.

Please act NOW – your gift will give hope



Biff! Kerpow! Splat! There goes another warlord

HAS YOUR local swimming-pool turned into a sports and leisure centre yet? Ours has, I know this because above the door where there used to be a modest sign saying "Entrance to pool" and an arrow, there is now a huge blue, white and gold billboard covering half the wall with SPORTS AND LEISURE CENTRE in 2-ft-high letters surrounded by fluorescent go-faster stripes. It's certainly impressive. People walking past stop and gaze at it in wonder; as well they might because, apart from the sign, nothing else has changed.

The line in the passage is still scuffed. The ladies' changing-room has the same mottled concrete floor sloping towards the centre, and the 2-in puddle of brackish water that inevitably collects in this depression still offers excellent

hydroponic opportunities for the cultivation of old tissues, verruca plasters, toenails and hair.

I lied. There have been changes. Outside the gents' changing-room, in place of the scales that gave your weight in stones, pounds and ounces, there is now a vast, chrome vending-machine offering 50 varieties of healthy drink and, beside it, a glass cabinet displaying super-support sports bras. This must be the leisure section.

Last time I went for a swim the receptionist asked if I wanted the special half-price membership to the gym, available in February only. What gym? "Kadisha," called the receptionist. "Would you show the lady our new facilities?" A sprightly young girl in trainers emerged from a back room and took me upstairs. "Isn't this where

the spectators' gallery is?" I asked, remembering noisy swimming-gala evenings. "I didn't think there was anything else up here apart from a couple of broom cupboards."



SUE ARNOLD
She showed me how, with a knee-jerk to the groin, I could unseat a mugger on the Northern Line

You'd be amazed how much fitness equipment you can squeeze into two broom cupboards, or how many sweaty people. If the man on the weighing-machine had had more hair, or indeed any hair at all, it would have brushed the knees of the girl on the exercise bike every time he leaned forward. Kadisha said there were plans to incorporate a multi-purpose exercise studio, but I'd had enough sport for one day and took the membership brochure home to ponder.

"Why don't you get a personal trainer," advised a well-heeled friend who is currently in the middle of an acrimonious divorce, most of the acrimony arising from her ex-husband's refusal to continue paying for her personal trainer. The mean beast, said Phoebe. "I know they're expensive. But

they're 10 times more effective than going to a gym and work out cheaper because you stop going to gyms because they're so squalid." I thought of the bald man on the weighing-machine. How much is a personal trainer, and what exactly do they do? I asked. How long is a piece of string, said Phoebe.

Next morning, Anne-Marie, tall, lithe, blonde and carrying a sports bag full of weights and boxing gloves, arrived at 7.30 sharp. She specialises in that strain of martial arts known as Tai-Kwon-Do, her aim being not just to make you fit, but fighting fit. Her husband, Winston, is the British Tai kick-boxing champion. I don't suppose their neighbours complain about loud music after 10.30pm.

Between six and seven that morning Anne-Marie had personally trained a banker in Hampstead who wanted toning and muscle definition. After me she had a couple of housewives who wanted to lose weight and, that evening, she was seeing a barrister who was particularly fond of that Tai-Kwon-Do exercise where you jump, twist and kick. He likes kicking really hard.

I cleared sundry shoes, cereal bowls and items of clothing from the sitting-room floor and Anne-Marie took me through some warm-up exercises. "Great," she said, "you're doing great. Now kick this." She produced what looked like a leather oven-glove and held it at waist height. "Kerpow!" went my bare foot against the glove.

"Mum, where's my packed lunch?" said the youngest. Bill Kerpow! Splat! I was now doing extended twist-kicks like Bruce Lee

and the lawyer. "Where is his lunch?" asked my husband.

Anne-Marie was explaining how Tai-Kwon-Do was invented by oppressed Korean peasants. There was one particularly impressive aerial kick designed to unseat oppressive warlords from their horses but, unfortunately, she couldn't demonstrate it for me because she had just cracked a rib. Gosh, how? I asked. After a bad coughing fit, said Anne-Marie.

I should like to learn how to unseat an oppressive warlord but, in the meantime, Anne-Marie showed me how with a graceful knee-jerk to the groin, I could unseat or more likely unman a mugger on the Northern Line.

Toning, muscle definition, self-defence. It's a snap. Go for it. Phoebe. Why settle for less?

THE SATURDAY PROFILE

DAVID DAVIES, ACTING CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF THE FA

The presentable face of football

THE PRESS conference was turning nasty and Bobby Robson, the England football manager, did not like the way the questions were going. Finally he snapped, got up from his chair, stepped off the dais, and opened a side door. Several brooms fell out. Robson, flustered, strode through the media to the door at the far end of the hall. Then he strode back; he had left his macintosh on the chair. Muffled sniggers were heard. This is how the Football Association used to work.

On Tuesday there was another press conference, called to announce the dismissal of Glenn Hoddle, one of Robson's successors. Seconds into it, with David Davies, the FA's director of public affairs and acting chief executive, reading a prepared statement, a man burst into the room screaming obscenities. As he was wrestled to the ground by security men and surrounded by press photographers, Davies quietly waited. Then, after a light-hearted reference to being interrupted for a "commercial break", he calmly read the statement again.

This is how the FA works today. This is why Davies, the FA's press officer, managed to emerge from a week in which his chief client was pilloried, ridiculed and sacked, with his own image enhanced. Acute political antennae, a smooth presentation, hard work and ruthlessness ensured that Hoddle's departure was not accompanied by that of his messenger.

Davies is football's spin doctor; its Alastair Campbell. But it is also its Peter Mandelson, seeking to direct policy as well as disseminate it.

In his dramatic rise from reporting on football to running it, he, too, has made enemies; but, unlike Tony Blair's fallen favourite, he is yet to overreach himself. He even survived his collision with Hoddle in the notorious World Cup diary, which betrayed dressing-room confidences.

Davies has now become, in the words of one leading commentator, "arguably the most powerful administrator in the English game". At a time when football, once confined to factory floor and public bar, now pervades the Cabinet, that is an influential position, one underlined by regular contact between Davies and Campbell.

Such a link should come as no surprise, given Davies's background. Politics is in the family; his grandfather was mayor of St Pancras and his father would have contested the 1950 election but for his early death. They were Tories, but other family members had socialist allegiances and it was that example which Davies followed when he became involved in student politics at Sheffield University.

Football was also in his blood by then; appropriately, he played left wing for the university. He had been enraptured by the perceived adult glamour of the game as an eight-year-old, when Manchester United fans wearing big, bright red rosettes had visited the family grocer's at Euston Station en route to that year's FA Cup final.

He took his twin passions to Oxford, where he acquired a teaching certificate he has never used, before entering journalism with the *Belfast Telegraph*. That week the Troubles began: timing, as he is fond of saying, is everything.

He swiftly moved on to the BBC, initially in Wales, then Manchester, London and Birmingham. During a varied 23-year career he covered everything politics, education, crime – even presenting *Songs of Praise*. The experience has been invaluable in his current job. His time as a lobby correspondent educated him in the ways of Westminster and brought him important contacts; his interviewing and presenting taught him to handle himself in front of reporters and cameras. All the while he maintained a link with football, covering matches, attending tournaments, seeing for himself the terrible gaffes the FA blundered into.

The FA had a press office, but it was

given little status and staffed accordingly. During Graham Taylor's ill-fated reign one press officer arrived at a media conference with a large alarm clock in an attempt to instil control over its duration. As in most British sporting institutions, the principle was the hopelessness of suppressing news rather than anticipating and managing it.

Davies was approached, with a brief to change this, almost five years ago. His title, "director of public affairs" rather than "press officer", reflected the enhanced role. It has proved to be a more difficult task than he could have imagined. He spent his first 12 months reacting to events as three footballers were accused of match-fixing, another confessed to a drugs, alcohol and gambling addiction, Eric Cantona assaulted a supporter, England fans rioted in Dublin, and there were allegations of "bungs" (illegal financial inducements) involving leading managers.

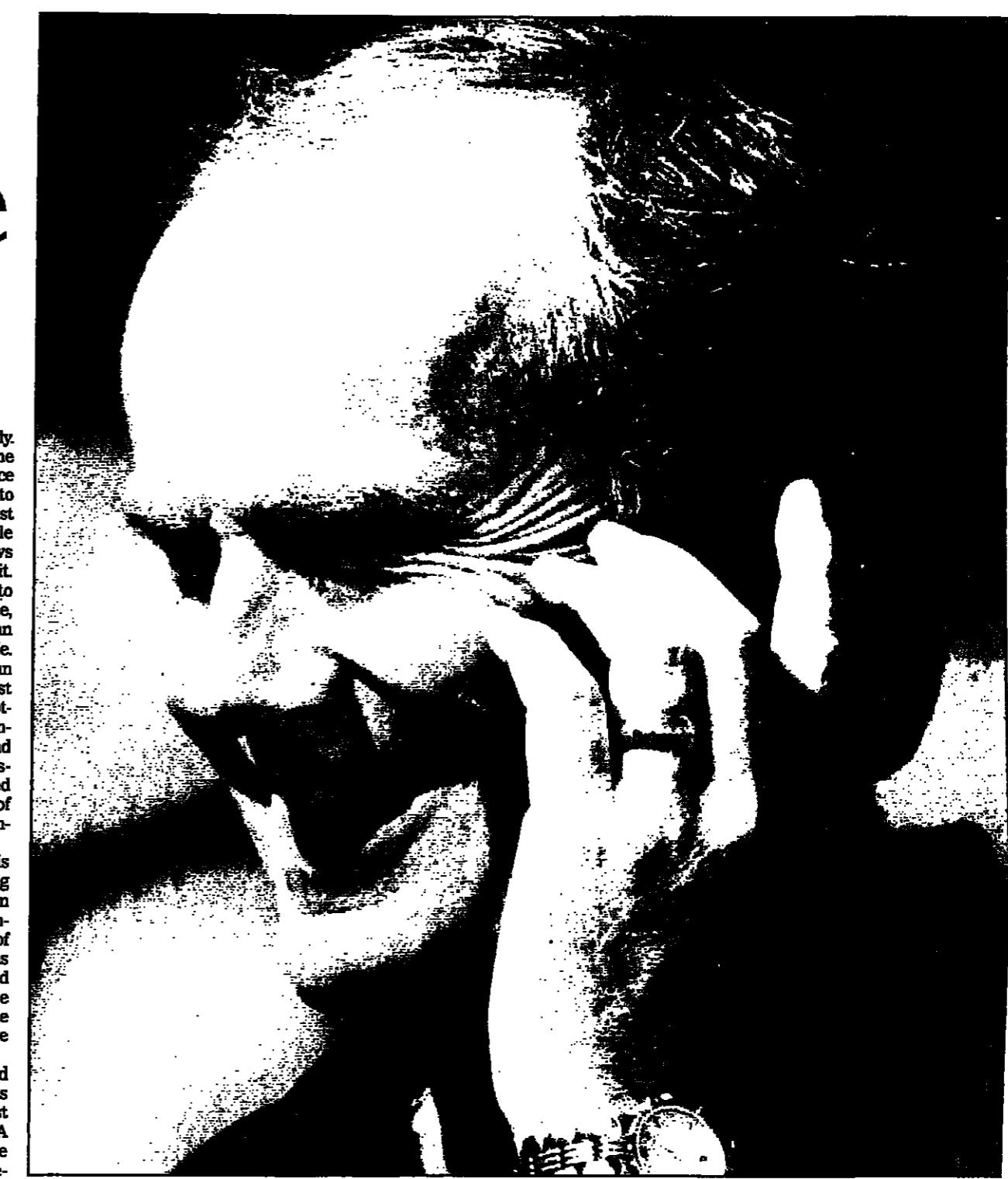
However, as with this week, each crisis gave Davies justification for pushing through changes, often in the face of stern resistance from a hidebound and conservative administration. His creation of a large press department led to accusations of empire-building but, aside from the need to meet the growing demands of the media, this was more a case of building the media base that was required to survive the FA's internal politics.

It has also, his detractors say, enabled him to concentrate on the more glamorous jobs while others do the paperwork. Most notably, Davies presents the televised FA Cup draw and acts as press attaché to the England coach of the day. Given his television experience it would be daft if he were not to undertake the first role, but there is a hint of vanity here, and it almost cost him his job in the summer.

Davies has advised three England managers: Terry Venables, Hoddle, and the caretaker incumbent, Howard Wilkinson. The media was divided by Venables: they either loved or hated him. Hoddle wanted to avoid this and sought to be even-handed. Thus, when he decided to write a book about England's World Cup campaign last summer, as had previous England coaches, he and Davies decided that Davies should "ghost-write" for him.

It was also his public relations disaster. Information was released that had been previously denied, and several leading figures in the game, including current internationals, were criticised. Davies's desire to tell a story had got the better of his judgement. He later admitted: "I wanted to be involved, as I had never written a book before – but I won't be doing another in a hurry."

He can also, notes a friend, be "pompous". Two years ago, at a reception in the British Embassy in Rome to promote England's 2006 World Cup bid, Davies told a rambling tale about the guest of honour, the former Manchester United and England footballer Sir Bobby Charlton. It was about the policemen cracked, and burst out



Called to action: a dramatic rise from sports reporting to running the Football Association Adam Butler PA

laughing. The whole affair had been set up by Terry Venables.

The pair formed a warm relationship based on humour. They once planned an April Fool's Day joke that involved faxing all the national newspapers to announce a new press conference policy – "one for journalists with joined-up writing, one for tabloids". To Davies's enduring frustration Venables leaked the tale.

Writing and surviving the World Cup brought Davies and Hoddle closer together but, last week, Davies cut Hoddle adrift as soon as he sensed the magic words "Bob-bee Char-lton". Long before the document it was obvious that the pay-off would be "and I was that poor student".

But Davies can laugh at himself and happily tells a tale from Euro '96, the football championship England hosted three years ago. One night Davies had retired to bed early, leaving the players celebrating an important victory. He was awoken by a call from reception informing him that a retired colonel living near the hotel had complained about the noise. He went outside, couldn't hear a thing, but told the players – who were not drunk – to keep the noise down, and went back to bed.

He was awoken again to be told that the colonel had complained to the police that two players had been running around naked in the hotel gardens and had been seen by his teenage daughter. The police were downstairs. They said the colonel wanted to press charges. The horrific prospect of this leaking out to the press loomed. Davies was asked to come down to the station to answer questions and to organise an identity parade. Then one of the policemen cracked, and burst out

members spending time in hospital, has given him pause for thought.

Most observers expect him to take it if the chance arises. Enough of the idealistic student remains to see football as a potential force for good and, since his arrival, the FA has become much more active in promoting social causes including that of disabled football. If he fails to be named as chief executive, he may stay in the game as long as football's star remains in the ascendancy. He enjoys the sport and, at present, the profile of the job is as high as anything in government. It is also possible to impact on people's lives more directly.

But should he choose to leave the sport, or be squeezed out, expect him to move into politics. He is ambitious, is well thought of in government circles and those of the Opposition, and already has much of the politician's manner. While not mendacious, he can stonewall. When the pressure was on this week he turned questions about Hoddle's comments about disabled people into an advertisement for an FA initiative on disabled sport.

Whatever happens to Davies, he is likely to be seen on our television screens for several years to come, and it will not be presenting *Songs of Praise*.

GLENN MOORE

RARELY CAN a project have been as ill-starred as Steve Martin's attempt a few years ago to revive Sergeant Bilko, the TV character made gloriously immortal by the great Phil Silvers. Martin's trouble is that he suffers from what doctors call Robin Williams syndrome, an insatiable need for every character he plays to be a touchy, feely, huggy bundle of love, which wasn't Bilko at all.

The joy of Bilko was that he was essentially disreputable, an army sergeant who would trick the young soldiers in his charge out of their meagre wages and shamelessly flatter his superiors for his own nefarious ends; yet for all that, you could not help liking him.

This was almost entirely due to the performance of Silvers, previ-

ously a successful vaudevillian, an occasional movie star, and the composer of Frank Sinatra's hit song "Nancy with the Laughing Face". who in his own words "was predestined to play Bilko".

Not that there was much performing involved. When Silvers was cloistered with the writer Nat Hiken in 1954, and asked to come up with a sit-com for CBS, his genius was to create a character based, according to the journalist Robert Chalmers, in a definitive profile of the actor; "as Silvers' own instincts, notably a fundamental compassion masked by a pathological craving for action".

Phil Silvers was the gambler's gambler, haunted by the voice that tormented Sergeant Bilko. "I hear money," Bilko would tell his men.

"Our money. Crying out into the night, 'Daddy, take me home'." The difference was, as Silvers once lamented, that Bilko had rather better scriptwriters. He used to win the jackpot sometimes.

Silvers, by all accounts, like many in thrall to his particular addiction, got his buzz out of losing. It was a buzz he was rarely short of, but it did not, it will hardly startle you to learn, bring him happiness. The

comedian's twin constant companions of melancholia and fear of failure blighted Silvers' life to the very end, in 1985.

The actor's mental problems even found their way into Nat Hiken's scripts for Bilko. In one episode, "The Rest Cure", Bilko feigns psychosis and is tormented by tom-toms audible only to himself. In another, he is plunged into a lifeless decline, having lost the urge to

gambol. "Freud," Bilko tells the motor pool in one of his semi-improvised monologues, "states that when a man has receded from society in his mind, and the frustration is inside him, he will withdraw from the world" – forewarning his own story.

But despite his problems, he – Bilko/Silvers – was, according to the evidence, a pussycat, loving of his children and generous to colleagues. And very, very funny. When he visits a medium, he says: "There are no lights on. She must be in."

He could improvise brilliantly. In the episode "The Court Martial", a chimpanzee is accidentally inducted into the motor pool. Bilko is defending the animal at its trial when, to the horror of the cast, the accused

climbs down from the stand and lifts the receiver of a nearby telephone. "Sir, I request an adjournment," says Bilko. "My client is calling for another attorney."

It is difficult to diverge from Chalmers' view that, for its brief life between 1955 and 1959, *The Phil Silvers Show* achieved a level of sustained inspiration that has never been bettered in television comedy. In an era when the tradition in American sit-com was for the male lead to be played by some nondescript Dick in a button-down shirt – Dick York in *Bewitched*, Dick Van Dyke in anything – Silvers' self-destructive decision to put so much of himself into prime time had more than a whiff of the gambler's foolhardy heroism about it.



THE WEEKLY MUSE

BY MARTIN NEWELL



A chunk of Beachy Head falls down,
The cliffs of Dover stop being white:
The teeth of England's southern coast

Are rotting quietly overnight
And disappointment will be rife
Among the tourists coming in.
Dispatch a flock of pigeons now,
And spare the heart of Vera Lynn.

It's curtains for the ruddy duck,
A waterfowl which likes to breed
With other species - so much so
That Michael Meacher feels the need
To wipe the randy creatures out,
A move that's almost guaranteed
To cause another rural row
Among the meres and river-weed
When twitchers in their anoraks,
Who hate these bronze *Anatidae*,
Lock horns with liberationists
On river banks each Saturday.

The "crisis of our Englishness" ...
A blunt new survey rates us
As a dull and vulgar people
Whose Celtic neighbours hate us.
The Scots, the Welsh, the Irish

Make cultural advances
While all we have are hooligans,
Hugh Grant and Morris dances.
Now may I say in our defence
True Englishness is subtler
And hidden deep within us
Like the passion of a butler
For the mistress in her mansion,
So it's rare that we reveal it.
But because you cannot see it
Doesn't mean we do not feel it.

Hoddle! Just the sound of it
Deserves a definition.
Hoddled by the tabloids,
Then deprived of your position.
Hoddle - used of journalists,
A good collective noun
For a pack of hayng toerags
Waiting months to do you down.

New clone control is on its way,
The Government has told us so.
But even if it's put in force,
If clones escape, how do we know?
Besides, my clone will be of use
To write my stanzas if I die.
And since he's worked with me I find
I like the bloke... and so do I.

DAYS LIKE THESE

8 FEBRUARY 1956

JAMES THURBER
(pictured), American
humorist, writes to
Wolcott Gibbs



"Dear Wolcott, I'm writing in my office in The New Yorker, through whose corridors Time magazine said 15 years ago, I often walked, an aged gray-eyed respected ghost. The aged and gray are still true, but it's hard to tell around here about respect anymore, or its kindred feelings. [The editor Harold Ross] used to send a note reading, 'Jesus Christ, that was a swell piece.' All you get now, if you insist on finding out what happened to a manuscript, is a telegram saying, 'Piece bought, money deposited'. A month ago they rejected a piece of mine with the highest and warmest and most complete praise I have got since Ross died."

"It seems that you should show up around here at least once a year to break the legend... that no one is allowed into your office and that it remains exactly as you left it last time you were

executors holding her slightly with one of his hands, she endured two strokes of the other executioner with an axe, she making very small noise or none at all, and not stirring any part of her from the place where she lay: and so the executioner cut off her head, saving one little gristle, which being cut asunder, he lift up her head to the view of all the assembly. Then, her dress of lawn falling from off her head, it appeared as grey as one of threescore and ten years old, polled very short, her face in a moment being so much altered from the form she had when she was alive, as few could remember her from her dead face. Her lips stirred up and down for a quarter of an hour after her head was cut off.

"Then one of the executioners, pulling off her garters, espied her little dog which was crept under her clothes which could not be gotten forth but by force, yet afterwards would not depart from the dead corpse, but came and lay between her head and her shoulders."

IAN IRVINE

AS OFTEN seems to be the case, we find ourselves in a quandary about re-decorating Weasel Villas. We'd plumped for art gallery white in the dining room, but then Mrs W read somewhere that grey is all the rage this year. Unfortunately, the walls are already painted grey. Alternatively, we could take the plunge for something a bit bolder. Something historical perhaps, redolent of a time celebrated for artistic creativity but notorious for sexual experiment, a discordant, neurotic era teetering on the brink of totalitarianism. If this seems all a long way from slapping on the Dulux, you could be right, but it is what is being advocated in the pages of the current issue of *The World of Interiors*, which devotes 10 pages to the "Weimar Palette".

As far as I'm aware, it is the first time that an article on this has been inspired by an unstable German republic (1919-1933). The magazine suggests that we should draw "the decadent styles of Twenties Berlin into the new, naughty Nineties". In case you're wondering how to adopt the fashionable Weimar look, the photo spreads include: a gaunt young man holding a carnation; a pair of elderly bohos in a terminally frayed leather chair; an amaryllis in a bath-tub; a large lady in a red dress posing before a length of red fabric (a strip at £345 per metre); and an octopus in a "uranium glass vase" (£1,000).

It looks just the ticket for Weasel Villas (particularly the octopus). Mind you, to get the full flavour of Weimar eigness, we'll probably need to invest in one or two accessories. Getting six

million unemployed into Weasel Villas may be a bit ambitious, but it should not be too hard to get Mrs W to plaster down her hair and wear a monocle. Eventually I can see us both drinking schnapps and bellowing an off-key Kurt Weill number: "Show me the way to the next whisky bar..." All very jolly. The only slight complication with such a daring makeover is: what comes after Weimar?

IS THERE no limit to Rupert Murdoch's hypocritical prudery? The shame-faced hacks of the Murdoch empire are obliged to insert a generous helping of asterisks when using even moderately rude words. A classic example occurred in last week's *Sunday Times* Book Section, where Harvey Forster's survey of book reviews quoted Will Self's view that "to a writer, literary biography is flat-out porn. W**k material".

Somehow, I find it unlikely that the acid-tongued Mr Self, who was writing in the *New Statesman*, incorporated this brace of stars in his original copy. Yet, in order to avert a fit of the vapours in the maiden aunts who read the *Sunday Times*, the offending epithet was ruthlessly emasculated. It is, of course, a pretty obvious irony that "W**k" material features on a daily basis in the *Sunday Times'* sister paper, *The Sun*.

It is just as well that the publishers of Jonathon Green's acclaimed *Dictionary of Slang* (Cassell, £25) do not take a Murdochian line with scatology.

Otherwise, this 1,300-page tome, which provides 797 alternatives for masturbation, would contain whole galaxies of asterisks. Personally, I'm drawn to Mr Green's more genteel inclusions, such as "Corl Chase me round the gasworks!" (defined as "general exel of astonishment"). But it turns out that even such Bunter-esque expressions as "Crikey!", "Cripes!", and "Crumbles!"

have opened in the Queen's Gallery at Buckingham Palace. With unexpected black humour, the title of the show is *The King's Head*. Treasures on show range from van Dyck's stunning triple portrait of the melancholy monarch to a post-mortem miniature said to be embroidered with the king's own hair. I had to go after reading a review by John Russell Taylor, intrigued in particular by his assertion that

"Charles I was the shortest English monarch (while his son Charles II was, oddly, the tallest)".

This was puzzling because I read somewhere that Edward I aka "Longshanks", the black-hearted villain of *Braveheart* (this, too), was the tallest royal. My researches revealed that Charles II's reputation as a giant stems from a "wanted" poster during the Civil War, which described him as "a tall, dark man above two yards high". However, there are one or two bits of evidence which suggest we should knock a few inches off this estimate. According to one reference work, the Merry Monarch

"rode several winners at Newmarket". When did you last see a jockey who topped off? A more substantial indication of his true stature appears in a 1661 portrait by John Michael Wright, which portrays the king wearing a pair of rather tarty doskin boots with approximately three-inch heels.

IT TURNS out that the small display in the Banqueting House, which I mentioned last week, is not the sole event that commemorates the execution of Charles I. A much larger exhibition devoted to the unfortunate sovereign

"will doubtless appear as C***ey, C***es! and C***bel" in Rupert's rags.

THE SHORTNESS of his dad is less in question - not that you would guess it was a half-pint from the noble portraits currently on display in Buck House. An instructive parallel may be drawn

with images of the less-than-towering House of Windsor! Though one of the works is titled *The High and Mighty Monarch Charles*, the exhibition catalogue reveals that he was "no more than five feet four". Still, this doesn't necessarily make him the shortest English monarch. I shouldn't have thought that Queen Victoria or, indeed, the present incumbent would have to bend too much to negotiate a lintel at that height. Of course, it should be borne in mind that Charles I's dimensions changed following his appointment with the axeman on 30 January 1649. After that, his claim to the title of shortest monarch is incontestable.

I SOMEHOW found time in my crowded schedule to see my old pals at the Old Royal Observatory for a sampling of its Greenwich Meridian 2000 range of wines and spirits, soon appearing at a supermarket near you. Though the two dozen wines were initially intended to represent each of the international time-zones, this proved a little tricky. The only land mass on zone 14, for example, is a chunk of Greenland, scarcely renowned for the finesse of its vintages, while zone 2 is Alaska.

By my estimation, the Greenwich grog covers only seven time-zones, but it has the compensation of being eminently quaffable (particularly the Scotch). It is, however, to be hoped that our official clock-watchers don't get too much of a taste for the official millennium hooch. After 75 years, the time signal wouldn't sound the same as: Pip, pip, pip, pip, pip, tick!

SPIRIT OF THE AGE

PAUL VALLEY

Take the third way to nirvana

THE SPECTRAL figures moved noiselessly through the darkness into the elegant Georgian drawing-room. It was just before daybreak as they settled, cross-legged or kneeling, on their cushions and mats, drawing blankets and shawls around their shoulders, for their long meditation.

The smell of the wick of a single lighted candle drifted through the air as the breathing settled and the rosy streak of the new dawn slowly lit the room.

This was Sharpham College for Buddhist Studies and Contemporary Enquiry, which has its home in a Palladian mansion on the banks of the river Dart in Devon. Its director spent seven years as a Tibetan Buddhist monk and three more in a Korean Zen monastery, but he is an Englishman, Stephen Batchelor, a scholar in classical Tibetan, Sanskrit and Pali.

In Britain today there are several traditional Buddhist monasteries, which seek to create islands of Eastern orthodoxy in a sea of Western secularism. But Sharpham is different.

It looks for a middle way between the dogmatism found in the ancient Asian traditions and the rational objectivity of Western scepticism. It offers a Buddhism without beliefs - just the kind of thing that Glenn Hoddle might have found handy this week when he blundered into the oriental minefield which is the doctrine of karma.

Batchelor's great project, which has caused a major stir among mainstream Buddhists across the world, has

been to separate the techniques of the Buddha from the metaphysics of the Hindu culture into which the Buddha was born - aspects of which, despite his radicalism in other areas, he simply accepted. "The Buddha offered a method," says Batchelor, who is an expert in the Zen, Tibetan and Theravada traditions. "But he took Hindu cosmology for granted - the assumption that the earth is flat; the idea of samsara, the endless cycle of birth and death."

Batchelor's insistence is that you don't have to accept Asian cultural norms to benefit from Buddhism which, quintessentially, is a technique for living rather than a belief system.

The great insight which the Buddha formulated some 500 years before Christ was that all life is unsatisfactory and that the cause of this is craving or desire. Therefore, the cessation of desire will bring about unlimited happiness (nirvana). He then set out an eight-fold path of moral, ethical and spiritual guidelines to achieving this.

This, Batchelor insists, is the real attraction of Buddhism, not the exotic exuberance of the robes, ritual and chanting that lured the great trek of Western youth to the hippie Himalayas. He should know. He was one of them.

"That Sixties sub-culture, with its psychotropic drugs, gave people the experience, however elusive, that one doesn't have to inhabit the world of common sense," he says. "But it goes back much further than that."

It goes back to the Enlightenment,

of course, when the Western psyche was rent asunder into the dualism of rationalism and romanticism. By the Sixties, the romantic impulse had declared that materialism, science and progress had - by jettisoning intuition - created a spiritual vacuum. They went East to recapture it.

Tibet took on the motherload of that projection; the last place to be mapped, it was seen as the last outpost of spiritual values which had resisted the incursions of the corrupt and degenerate West," says Batchelor, as we stride across the muddy fields of the 500-acre farm in which the college is set. "Tibetan Buddhism acts as a huge magnet for those of such a frame of mind. It has a mesmeric effect - Westerners are mystified and fascinated. But, at a certain point, the tide begins to turn; in the end I realised I was still Stephen Batchelor who was born in Watford, and couldn't live with the split identity."

The result is the stripped-down, reduced version he sets out in his international best-seller, *Buddhism Without Beliefs*. It does not reject the central notion of rebirth, so much as redefine it. On life after death, he adopts the agnostic position of saying that we simply don't know. On rebirth, he says the concept does not necessarily imply a continuation of our personality, but only of the force of life in the cycle of nature. The notion of karma - which insists, as Glenn Hoddle knows all too well, that actions have consequences - then becomes a mere

statement of fact, rather than of moral culpability. Had Hoddle been able to separate metaphysics from morality so neatly, he might still be the England coach.

Traditionalist Buddhists are indignant at all this. Remove the brick of reincarnation and the moral edifice collapses, they insist. "Batchelor is ready to cast away too much that is integral," says one critic, the Venerable Bhikkhu Bodhi, president of the Buddhist Publication Society of Sri Lanka. The result, he says, is simplistic: "The ultimate outcome of such concessions could be a psychologically oriented humanism tinged with Buddhist philosophy and a meditative mood."

That, of course, is its very appeal to many Westerners, as was evident from

the conversations of the students at Sharpham, who were typical of the profile of the modern European Buddhist - independent professionals, aged mainly 30 to 45, who grew up in homes without any religious affiliation.

"It appeals to the modern sense of pragmatism," says Batchelor. "They are not asked to believe, only to do - sit and watch their breath and see what happens." That may open the door to a world in which they can detect an inkling of something that can't be expressed in words - the mystical, ineffable, subtler, deeper truth that some would call God. Or they may just learn how, in a hectic, driven, compulsive life, just to sit still, walk more slowly and pay more attention to the here and now. "Either way," says Stephen Batchelor,

Do computers threaten liberty?



From a speech by the former cabinet minister Tony Benn at a workshop on the 'Data Bank Society' organised by the National Council for Civil Liberties (15 NOVEMBER 1970)

whom and for how long - for ever? How do you protect Sir Alec Douglas-Home from having his name submitted to the yippies as a would-be member, so that all the computers recording this begin to identify him as an undesirable and dangerous figure? Who is responsible at every stage for this information?

If we are talking about the end of privacy let us end the privacy of those who record the facts about us, and let those who are the librarians of this system have to put their imprint on each bit of information they store, so that later, if it turns out to be inaccurate, we know who put the inaccurate information into the machine.

The doctrine of personal responsibility has to be re-injected into these systems. What rights has the citizen got? Has he the right to know that information about him is being collected, to decline to have it collected, to be told why it's collected, who is collecting it and how long it is to be collected?

What damages might be paid to a man for inaccurate information wrongly used? And where do the government and the supervision of government activity come into the picture of defence and protection which we are now considering?

Two final points. The first question I would ask you is whether privacy is actually what we are talking about. I think that the anonymity of modern

urban life is one of the most soul-destroying things that has ever happened to society.

When you have created the totally anonymous society, then you pay for psychiatrists to listen to you, personnel officers to consider human factors, members of Parliament and welfare officers to whom you can write to without any religious affiliation.

Second, make it clear - and this is the political significance of what we are doing - that as a community we recognise the great potential and value of the system that is now at our disposal, and that we do not intend to surrender our power by default to those who have the information that, if abused, could take away our civil rights.

And do not be pessimistic about the capacity of winning this battle, I know that many people in this area get very depressed because no one seems to be interested in it, and yet all of the great changes in our society - the development of the trade unions, the welfare state, the health service, proper education and, now, the war against pollution - have bubbled up from below when sufficient people were concerned about the problem to demand an answer to it.



THE WEASEL

On discovering that decadence is the new grey and Charles I was the shortest English monarch, I celebrate with an Alaskan red

REVIEW BY MARTIN NEWELL



THE SATURDAY ESSAY

The next generation will be feminists in all but name



NATASHA WALTER

Feminism still has a purpose, while men ignore domestic work and go unpunished for their sexual violence

EVER SINCE Mary Wollstonecraft wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* more than 200 years ago, people have been arguing that there is no future for feminism, and that argument has gained ground again in recent years.

After all, don't women have everything now that they have ever wanted? Aren't they free to fulfil their individual dreams and desires, at work, at home and in bed, without discrimination, violence or fear? Aren't they even overtaking men in their confident, bright, happy lives? You keep hearing that the inequality that still exists is just a faint trace of old injustice, and it will soon be washed away without the need for any particular effort on our part. And you hear that whatever inequality still exists is a sign that women are simply choosing still to live different lives to those of men - and why should they be denied that choice?

There is a kernel of truth in this idea that women have come so far and so fast that they don't need feminism any more. Feminism won't have a future in Britain unless feminists come to terms with the way that women's lives really have changed recently for the better.

This generation of young women is beginning to lead lives that are very different from those of their mothers and grandmothers. And this is especially true of educated young women. Girls are surpassing boys at school and university and moving into the professions in ever greater numbers. That educational success often spills into increased confidence and freedom in the way young women live their personal lives. And women have all sorts of bright heroines to look at, whether they are so young that they are dancing along to the Spice Girls, or are looking at Mo Mowlam or Kirsty Wark or Madeleine Albright for pointers on how to live in the public eye without fear.

When I edited *On the Move*, a book of essays about the future of feminism which is being published next week, I found that it was the youngest women who were contributing to it who had the most optimistic voices. Take the example of one young British woman of Nigerian extraction, Caroline Abomei, who is just 15 years old. "My opportunities are much better than my mother's," she says. "My mother was expected to stay at home and do all the housework and prepare to be a wife... that's now changed. I mean, my mum's always telling me that I should get 'my education' go to university, and then I can start thinking about getting married."

Or take 15-year-old Karen Loughrey, who says: "Whatever I want to do, I know that I can go and do it, regardless of whether I'm male or female."

But this optimistic vision of women's lives is not the whole truth, not by a long way. It ignores the dead weight of inequality that still presses upon women, and that will shape even the lives of this generation of young women unless a real effort is made to forge a more equal society.

Feminism still has a purpose today, because feminism cannot cease to exist while women are denied basic economic and political equality, and while men are free to ignore domestic work, and are unpunished when they perpetrate sexual and domestic violence. It cannot cease to exist when, for too many young women, there



Women today have all sorts of heroines to look up to, ranging from the Spice Girls and All Saints to Mo Mowlam and Kirsty Wark

Nicola Kurtz

are no opportunities before them beyond poverty pay and lonely child-rearing.

If you want to know why feminism still has a purpose, forget the rhetoric for a moment, and just look at the facts. Sometimes it's hard to do that - hard and rather unpleasant to stare reality in the face rather than sticking with dreams and fantasies.

For a start, what does the reality of women's power look like? Women have almost no concrete power in, say, the political world, since even with the new intake of all those vividly dressed Labour women, only one in six MPs is a woman. They don't have any power to speak of in the business world either, since only four in a hundred company directors is a woman. Have women really chosen not to share power in Britain? Or have they found that the working culture in the most powerful places in the land still militates against their full participation?

When Caroline Abomei, that confident 15-year-old, went out into the working world, she suddenly became aware of how this inequality might press on her own future. "I want to be a journalist when I am older," she says. "I did some work experience at a national newspaper and there were some women there, but the editors were all older men and I actually felt pretty intimidated by it. I was thinking, 'where are the women?'"

Those who admit that women haven't quite realised the old dream of sharing influence at the top of society often argue that in other jobs they are equal or even overtaking the men. They argue that only middle-class professional women are asking for more equality, and that most women in society are happy with their lot.

But outside the professions, inequality presses even more heavily on women. Women who work as shop assistants and cleaners, as nurses and secretaries, are rarely paid on a level with men doing similarly skilled work. Women take home, on average, just 50 per cent of the weekly wage that a man takes home. The low-paid in Britain are almost all women: 31 per cent of working women are paid less than £4 an hour, but only 11 per cent of working men earn such low wages.

When women have children, they find that the inflexibility of the workplace, and the reluctance of men to take on their share of domestic work, means that they lose out

relative to men: a woman who has children loses, on average, more than 50 per cent of the money she would have made throughout her lifetime if she had not had children, but a man's lifetime wages are not affected by having children.

Do women really choose this heavy burden of economic inequality? Or do they find themselves trapped in a world of low pay and excessive domestic duties because of the outdated attitudes of their partners and their employers?

Those people who admit that working women haven't yet achieved equality will often argue that this inequality is still a pretty comfortable situation for women; that women are released from the responsibility of breadwinning, and allowed a more leisurely approach to their careers. They ignore the fact that for too many women *inequality is not just about a lack of promotion, it is about poverty*. More women than men live on benefits, both when they are young and when they are old. The vast majority of the 1.5 million single parents in Britain are women, and 70 per cent of them live on benefits, bringing up their children in real poverty. Their children show evidence of poor nutrition, low growth rates and reduced life expectancy compared to their richer peers. Can we bear to see the effects of inequality visited so harshly on these women and their children?

Feminism has not always been good, in recent years, at drawing women of different classes together. Aminatta Forna, a writer in *On the Move*, reminds us that middle-class professional women shouldn't feel that they have the luxury of giving up on feminism before working-class women have benefited from it; and Livi Michael, a novelist, argues that working-class women have often felt alienated from the old feminism that put more emphasis on women's relationship to their bodies than on their material equality. The view of Forna and Michael, with which I agree, is that women do not have to be identical to one another in order to work together.

Despite all the work that feminism still has to do, many people see little future for it, because they observe that it is no longer a unified movement with one banner, one voice and one demonstration. It is true that the women's movement has fragmented and splintered. But that

doesn't mean that its force has dissipated. Splinters of it are now lodged in the hearts and minds of almost every woman, and man, in Britain.

You can hear feminist ideas from singers, journalists, MPs, activists, actors, lawyers, and women working unpaid at home. Feminism is no longer confined to one group in society. And, because of this, feminists can find themselves more powerful, working in the mainstream with people from all walks of life.

For instance, in their campaigns to ensure that men are brought to justice for sexual violence, the activists at Women Against Rape find that lawyers, MPs and journalists on newspapers including *The Independent* and the *Daily Mail* will take on their ideas for reform. And that can bring success - only six years ago, rape in marriage was made a crime, and in this parliament, measures are being debated to reduce the victimisation in court of women who have experienced rape.

Similarly, in their campaigns for more flexible and family-friendly working practices, the activists at New Ways to Work find that women in unions, and civil servants, are working along the same lines that they are, and - as the Government's new proposals on increased maternity leave and parental leave show - that can create real change. The fact that feminism has now fragmented and entered the mainstream does not mean that it has lost its power, its passion and its drive to change society.

Another great change in feminism, one that will gain ground in the coming years, is that men are beginning to see how feminism can spell opportunities for them, as well as losses. Equality in the workplace does not just mean taking power away from men, since it also gives them new choices. It releases fathers from the necessity of being the main breadwinner, and gives them the freedom to participate with the upbringing of their children.

Although men have been slow at changing their behaviour to take on domestic roles, those changes are beginning: young men tell survey-takers that they want to be more involved in parenting than their fathers were, and that they believe that domestic work should be shared between men and women. At the moment, rhetoric still outruns reality, but as the 20th century was characterised by the movement of

women into the workplace, the 21st century will be characterised by the movement of men into the home. Now, feminism can be seen not as a battle between women and men, but as a movement in which both sexes can join together to move towards equality.

If we can characterise feminism today as an ideology that has been taken up by women and men in all walks of life, we still have to ask: are there real goals for feminism now? I believe that there are, and that they lie in four main areas. First, in achieving equality at work: measures such as the minimum wage, family-friendly working practices, child-care provision and stronger measures for equal pay must be brought in to create more equality between women and men at work. Second, in supporting women in poverty, above all increasing the income of women who are living on benefits with children. Third, in encouraging men in their participation in domestic and family life, a change that requires a push for parental leave from the top, as well as cultural changes from the bottom. And fourth, in protecting women against sexual and domestic violence, by providing more support services, and reforming legal practice so that more violent men are brought to justice.

If feminists aim for these concrete and unmistakable changes, our future will be immeasurably enhanced. It's easy to despair, looking at the obstacles that stand between us and equality. But if you look back over the last 100 years, the changes that have occurred in women's lives seem astounding - from the movement in the workplace, to the revolutions in sexual behaviour and family life.

Is it so difficult to imagine that, in another 100 years, if we work to move forward, society will have changed again? It is striking that many young women now are taking on the ideals of feminism, whether or not they call themselves feminists. As 15-year-old Karen Loughrey puts it: "To me, feminism is about finding equality between men and women in all areas of society, from work to family situations. I definitely care about feminism, and I think a lot of people still do."

'On the Move: feminism for a new generation' edited by Natasha Walter, is published by Virago next Thursday, price £9.99

BAROMETER

SEAN O'GRADY

Flying Squad

Can't really see the Sweeney in this. But Devon and Cornwall's plods have decided to try out



this three-wheeler electric Panda car; the City-el (top speed 25 mph). This is not the first of such experiments. In the Sixties, one police force in the Midlands decided to use glass fibre Reliant Regals as pursuit vehicles. The episode resulted in the memorable coinage "plastic pigs". The question is: can you be tough on crime and tough on pollution at the same time?

Groundhog Day

Sad news from Wiarton, Ontario. Their groundhog day festival was marred by the death, at the age of 22, of their star groundhog, Wiarton Willie. He was placed in a coffin with his paws crossed, clutching a carrot, before being laid to rest.

Le Roi Soleil

In an elegant speech this week, Paddy Ashdown described the Prime Minister in the following terms: "We live in the era of the Sun King. The opinion that matters is the opinion of the Sun King." Mr Ashdown knows, perhaps, of what he speaks. Louis XIV, for c'est lui, came to represent absolute power and his long reign (1643-1715) was marked by a curbing of the powers of the traditional nobility. Louis also left France with a legacy of high taxation to pay for his excesses. And there is something baroque about Peter Mandelson, "Léfat, c'est moi," as Tony might say.

Pretty Polly

Sexual harassment crosses the species barrier. Peter the macaw had been worried about the attentions of a female who shared his home at a pet shop. But when Prudence invaded his cage and tried to get a conjugal with him, he squawked freedom and crashed through the pet-shop window. He's not been seen since. Prudence, meanwhile, remains as lovesick as a parrot.

Image of the week

After 20 years, Playboy casino is reintroducing the bunny girl. New girls will attend Bunny School, learn the Bunny Bible, and live in accommodation called Bunny Huches. This is Ava Fabian, who clearly has a gradualist approach to the bunny project.



MY WEEK

GILLIES MACKINNON,
DIRECTOR OF 'HIDEOUS KINKY'

and directorial freedom offered by independent films far outweigh the financial disadvantages of having less commercial backing.

Tuesday
My brother Billy rang from Australia this morning. He wrote the screenplay for HK so he was over the moon when I told him about the Sundance Festival and said that Australian critics seemed to like it too. He's cutting one of the films in *Tube Tales* at the moment, which is a collection of short films set on the London Underground - God knows why he's doing it in Sydney.

Wednesday
I had the difficult task of being on the jury for the Bafta short film awards. We watched 20 films and selected a short-list. It was a real privilege to do, but excruciatingly difficult.

Later on, I wrote a letter to Kate. I think she feels quite exposed at the moment - after her massive success in *Titanic*, everyone is waiting with bated breath to see whether she'll sink or swim in her next film. I wanted her to know how much people had appreciated her in the States - strangers were stopping me in the streets to give me messages of congratulation to pass on to her.

Went to Soho House with friends tonight to have a drink and wind down. Slightly apprehensive about how the British reviews are going to be tomorrow, but so far so good...

Thursday
Did an interview for GLR today. Most of the publicity and promotions for HK have already been done, but there is a last-minute push as the film is on general release from tomorrow.

I am so pleased with the brilliant press reviews today. In general, I think they pick up and appreciate the mood and subtleties of *Hideoous Kinky*. There was only one poor review - it suggested that the film came to nothing more substantial than a collection of holiday snaps. I thought it was the most meaningful little review, totally missing the point of the film. Ironically, it was *The Independent's*.

Friday
7.30am start. Spoke to the producer Ann Scott about yesterday's reviews; she was in a good mood. I'm thinking of slipping in to a showing of HK tonight. I like observing reactions incognito from the general public. It's often more honest, but always more honest than the glitz and glamour of celebrity premieres.

INTERVIEW BY JANE BOWERS



Mackinnon: 'So far so good'

Sunday
Arrived back in England late this evening, jet-lagged and flu-ridden. I have just been to the Sundance Film Festival in Utah - a festival co-founded by Robert Redford which celebrates independent films. I am delighted with the positive response *Hideoous Kinky* received there. I was a bit worried about how it would go down with an American audience because the rhythm of the film is deliberately meandering - not fulfilling the fast-paced, action-packed conditions of so many Hollywood blockbusters. Another anxiety was that the hippie aspirations of Kate Winslet's character might not be received with much sympathy by the more puritanical elements of American culture, particularly as Utah is very much Mormon territory. I'm happy to say that all my fears were dispelled - they loved it.

Monday
I arrived back in England late this evening, jet-lagged and flu-ridden. I am delighted with the positive response to my last film, *Regeneration*, called: she said she was on her way to the Canadian Geni awards (the Canadian equivalent of the Oscars) as the film has been nominated for 11 awards - nice to be told! Everyone presumes you already know because you're the director... but not necessarily.

I've been looking at story-boards and illustrations for a new project all afternoon. It's going to be called *The Water Horse* and will be set in my home country - Scotland. Like HK, it's going to be low budget and independent. I have tried working on mainstream big-budget films; I once directed a film starring Steve Martin called *A Simple Twist of Fate* and I really felt restricted by the Hollywood studio that was funding it. I think the advantages of artistic

Japan's most sinister cult is making a creeping return. But a tiny village is mounting stiff resistance. By Richard Lloyd Parry

Aum: the second coming

Until the strangeness began at the very end of last year, nobody in Japan had ever really heard of Kita Mimaki. Its British equivalent would be one of the less charismatic villages of South Wales or the Scottish lowlands - a scattered collection of farms and holiday homes on a chilly flank of the Japan Alps. The locals refer to their village as "calm". The most striking thing about the place is the overshadowing mass of Asama-yama, a ghostly mountain with a ragged peak that was created by a massive volcanic explosion in the distant past.

It looms over the village, dominating the skyline, and it is this mountain, as much as anything else, that seems to have drawn the strangers to Kita Mimaki.

The first sign that something was up was mundane enough: a 15-ft high aluminium fence was suddenly erected around one of the village's vacant properties. In a Japanese community, where everybody is expected to know everybody else's business, such a drastic attempt at preserving privacy could only arouse suspicions.

Nasty rumours began circulating, so the village government hired a private detective to find out what it could about the new owners of the property, a big, two-storey house in a large plot. The rumours turned out to be true. Now everyone who watches Japanese TV has heard of Kita Mimaki, and life in the village will never be the same.

The villagers have dug a trench around the property and have put up a barbed-wire fence of their own. Specially mounted video-cameras keep it under constant surveillance, through TV monitors situated in an emergency command centre in a neighbouring building. And every day, around the clock, the property is patrolled by teams of 100 villagers, alternating by rota out of a pool of more than 2,000 volunteers. The aim of all this security is not to guard the house and its contents, but to prevent its legal owners from getting in. For, as the private detective soon discovered, the true purchaser of the property was not the lawyer named on the title deed, but the notorious religious cult, Aum Shinri Kyo.

The impact of the discovery on a place such as Kita Mimaki is hard to overestimate for, as undesirable neighbours, Aum Shinri Kyo have no equal. The cult was founded in the Eighties by a half-blind guru who calls himself Shoko Asahara, and its members embarked on a series of bizarre and outrageous crimes which for years remained unsolved by the Japanese police. As early as 1989, according to confessions by former members, they murdered a lawyer who had been acting against the cult, along with his wife and baby. A string of other killings followed, of young members who were trying to leave the cult. In 1994, seven people were killed by mysterious fumes in Matsumoto, a city close to Kita Mimaki.

The climax came on 20 March 1995 when, in an apparent attempt to hurry along the Armageddon predicted by their guru, his followers released poison nerve gas in the Tokyo subway.

It was the height of the morning rush-hour: 12 people died and more than 5,000 others were blinded or fell ill. During the raids and trials that followed (the guru, Asahara, is still being tried, in a case that could drag on for a decade), it emerged that the gas used in the two attacks was sarin, a nerve agent invented by the Nazis. The cult's many chemists had manufactured it from scratch, in a series of "facilities" alarmingly similar to the property in Kita Mimaki - isolated buildings in small villages overshadowed by another beautiful volcano, Mount Fuji.

"We know what they did in the past," says Masayoshi Mizushima, director of the anti-Aum headquarters. "What's to stop it happening again?"

When a party of about 30 Aum members turned up in Kita Mimaki early one morning last month to move into their new property, they were greeted by 500 villagers who had been summoned from their beds at 4am by the village's public address system. "There is no other way," says Shinichi



They shall not pass: villagers in Kita Mimaki keep a round-the-clock watch on the house purchased by the 'sarín' cult, Aum Shinri Kyo

Stuart Issett

Ide, the chief of the village's volunteer fire brigade, who stands on patrol in the snow. "This is war between us and them, because once they get inside there will be no way to stop them."

And Kita Mimaki's problem is not unique. Remarkably, four years after its uniquely horrible act of terrorism, Aum Shinri Kyo is not only still in existence, it is undergoing something of a revival. Membership is up, its businesses are flourishing, and virtually every month brings reports of new property purchases. There is an Aum website, there are Aum computer shops, and there have been unsuccessful attempts at setting up Aum tuition services and, most fantastic of all, an Aum babysitting business.

The Public Security Investigation Agency (PSIA), the closest thing Japan has to an domestic intelligence bureau, has published two reports warning of the resurgence of the cult.

"As far as we can see," says Mr Kai, the head of the PSIA's Aum unit, "the potential danger represented by the cult hasn't diminished at all."

That Aum should even exist, let alone be in the process of expansion, may seem remarkable enough. In 1997 the cult was stripped of its tax privileges as a religious organisation; many people assumed that after it had been revealed (in sworn court testimony) as a murderous fraud, Master Asahara's followers would quietly disband. But the following year, those of the cult's leaders who had not been arrested

and jailed regrouped, and former members began to return. According to estimates by the PSIA, the group now has some 700 "monks" - active resident members who leave their homes and families to devote themselves to meditation, ascetic practices and voluntary work on behalf of the cult. On top of this are 1,500 non-resident "laymen", far fewer than the 11,000 members who once followed Asahara, but enough to provide a pool of free labour for its profitable computer manufacturing business.

The cult has recently distributed flyers around Tokyo; according to the PSIA,

still denying the charges against him. "They seemed abnormal," says Mr Mizushima about the cultists who turned up that January morning in an unsuccessful attempt to move into their new house. "Their eyes didn't focus. They looked as if they'd been brainwashed."

But an encounter with Aum itself produces a very different impression. It is surprisingly easy to arrange a couple of phone calls, a list of questions, and faxed directions to a house in suburban Tokyo. Outside is a clutter of bikes and boxes; the door is opened by a smiling young man in

leaders, he suddenly found himself a senior member. He is polite, shy, articulate and entirely lacking in obvious creepiness or insincerity. For four years, he has taken on the innumerable task of fielding questions and requests from the invariably hostile Japanese media. Aum's line on the sarin attack and other killings is not to deny that they took place, but to wait and see how the trials unfold. The cult's members still carry out what they call "religious training" - Shoko Asahara's personal combination of meditation and yoga, assisted by the use of bizarre "headgear", an arrangement of wires and electrodes that is said to connect the wearer to the "brainwaves" of the guru himself.

The teachings of "the Master" are still central, and he remains the heart of the cult, although his place as leader is now occupied by his children - his 13-year-old daughter, Rika, known by the Sanskrit name Achari, and two sons, Akiteru and Gyojiko, aged six and four. The Aum posters feature these two little boys sitting in the lotus position in purple pyjamas, their eyes closed in concentration. "They emit light, and when I meet them I too am illuminated," says Mr Araki. "They are very special, unique beings." He and his fellow cultists are odd, rather pitiable people. They wear strange clothes, sing strange chants, and revere a man who probably ordered the cruel deaths of 50 people. But do they really deserve to be feared as they are?

Even Mr Kai of the PSIA will go no further than to speak of a "potential" threat

from the new Aum. "We've never found evidence of danger," he admits when pressed, "and we think it's impossible for them to cause the same problem again." For a start, and even if they are wrong about their phones being tapped, they are monitored constantly, undergoing frequent raids by the police, whose behaviour sometimes verges on harassment. Last November, an Aum member won compensation after an incident (captured by chance on video) in which a police officer assaulted him, and then claimed that he himself had been attacked. The failure to anticipate the sarin attack, despite numerous clues and warnings, was the Japanese police's greatest-ever humiliation, and you sense in their excessive vigilance a desire to get even.

"I've listened to what the village people have to say and I understand their concerns. But it's the police and the media who are stirring up feelings against us, making people worried," says Mr Araki. "What the police want to do is create some kind of enemy, and draw attention to it, so they can create a scapegoat for society."

The true mystery of Aum is not what its members believe, but why they choose to believe it - why, in such a sophisticated society, it draws intelligent people such as Mr Araki. Aum is not an alien, but a home-grown monster: the offspring of late-20th-century Japan. "All of us are thinking it's very strange," says Mr Araki of Kita Mimaki. "Why does Aum have such appeal for people? That is the most difficult and important question of all."

The one that wanted to get away

ENTHUSIASMS FADE easily when you are eight and, thankfully, my son Darcy seemed to have forgotten all about fishing in the excitement of Christmas and the holidays. It's not that I am particularly averse to this pastime - I try to encourage any interest that involves no violence, television or computers. But though dangling a line over the side of a boat or reclining by a stretch of cool water as the sun goes down may be summer perfection, matters are entirely different in the depths of a wet English winter. Few activities could be less alluring than huddling next to a green tent beside an urban pond on a grey day.

So I wasn't about to remind Darcy of his love of fishing, for a few months at least. But I reckoned without Greg, an electrician, jazz fan, Chelsea supporter

and angling enthusiast who lives round the corner. Greg had dropped by to fix a couple of light sockets, and we were speculating on why so many electricians are keen anglers, like the father of Darcy's school friend who sometimes takes the boys out for the day.

All this talk reawakened the angler in Darcy, and in the days that followed he took up the refrain, "Dad, when can we go fishing?" I stalled for as long as I could. "You may not mind the cold, but the fish won't bite in this weather," I insisted, as if I would know. But last weekend I ran out of excuses, so we set off on The Fishing Expedition.

First stop was the angling shop, where Darcy spent a sizeable chunk of his personal savings on rod rests, floats, some hooks, some line, and a punnet of wriggling, pink-and-white

PARK LIFE



BRUCE MILLAR

maggots. We picked up some tips from the bloke who runs the shop, admired the photographs of regulars posing with their biggest catch in the front window, and pocketed various brochures advertising fishing courses and "Father and Son" family lessons at a lake near the M25. So far I thought, quite a pleasant way to spend an afternoon.

Then, wellied and wrapped up against the

elements (and me with a magazine to pass the time), we set off on the five-minute walk to the pond in our local park. My expansive mood came to an abrupt end, as it tends to, with the words, "Dad, can you set up my rod?" So I began the achingly tricky task of fastening the rod on the hook with fingers that appeared to have swollen to twice their usual size.

Now came the float - another dodged job - followed by the weights, tiny split lead balls that have to be bitten on to the line. I lost a couple, but managed to avoid swallowing them. Finally, Darcy was ready to cast, and I rewarded myself by taking a perch on a park bench and opening my magazine. "Daaaad, the geese. Oh no, I've caught one." And there was a big fat goose, which had swum over nosily hoping for a slice of

stale bread, now tugging one grey foot that was attached to Darcy's line. I grabbed the rod and pulled. The line broke.

As calmly as I could, I repeated the whole setting-up process, then returned to my seat and my magazine, while Darcy cast once more. "Daaaad, the geese are back..." I was still reading my first paragraph as I sprinted, shouting at the top of my voice, back to the pond. "Dad, why are you swearing at the geese?" Darcy inquired, hugely amused at my stupidity. As if they would understand!

For once, I thanked heaven for the early winter evenings. "We'd better go now - it's getting too dark to see." Darcy had only had about five minutes' fishing, but it had taken us all afternoon. Perhaps it's time to book one of those Father and Son fishing lessons.

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Alfred Janes

ALFRED JAMES was an artist of great gift and originality. Born in Swansea, where his parents kept a fruit shop, he was one of a remarkable artistic generation from that town which included the painter Ceri Richards, the poets Vernon Watkins and Dylan Thomas, and the composer Daniel Jones, all of whom became close friends.

He showed precocious promise, always loving to draw and paint, and, after Swansea Grammar School, he attended Swansea College of Art, where, in 1931, he won a scholarship to the Royal Academy Schools in London. James enjoyed the academy at first, especially the drawing classes under the exacting eye of Tom Mawson, but the lure of modernism in the nearby Cork Street galleries proved disturbingly distracting, and he left the schools before completing the course.

He stayed for some time in London, painting in the succession of Chelsea flats he shared with William Scott, his closest friend at the Academy Schools, and later with Dylan Thomas and Mervyn Levy. These were Depression years: hard times but happy times, spent in unforgettable company. In 1934 he painted his first portrait of Thomas, now in the collection of the National Museum of Wales. It remains the best portrait of the poet, cooler and less romantic than that by Augustus John, to whom by curious chance it owes its survival.

Janes left behind the paintings and drawings he had made in his last London flat and most of them were lost forever, but not before Cedric Morris and John had collected a few, including the portrait, for an exhibition of Welsh painters held in Cardiff.

In 1934 James returned to live in Swansea, where he remained until the Second World War. During this period he painted a series of still-lifes and taught part-time at Swansea College of Art. The handful of still-life paintings he made in the Thirties are among his finest achievements. They were painted with extraordinary precision and painstaking slowness, each taking many hours a day over several months. In a letter to Vernon Watkins, written after the war, Thomas ironically recalled this pace: "How is that blazzy painter, that lightning artist, that prodigal canvas stammer?" Has he reached the next fibone of the fish he was dashing off before the war?

The still-life subjects of these extraordinary works are seen as through a crystalline glazed grid, a

faceted transparent screen, behind which fish and fruit are transformed into a mineral brilliancy. They are utterly unique in the art of their time.

Janes joined the Army soon after the outbreak of hostilities, but defective vision (of a purely mechanical kind) kept him in the non-combatant Pioneer Corps. On leave in November 1940 he married Mary Ross, "auburn-haired leading light" of the lively Swansea Little Theatre, an amateur outfit at the heart of the lively art and culture of the town. He was posted to Egypt, where he remained for two and a half years without home leave, working in a prisoner-of-war camp.

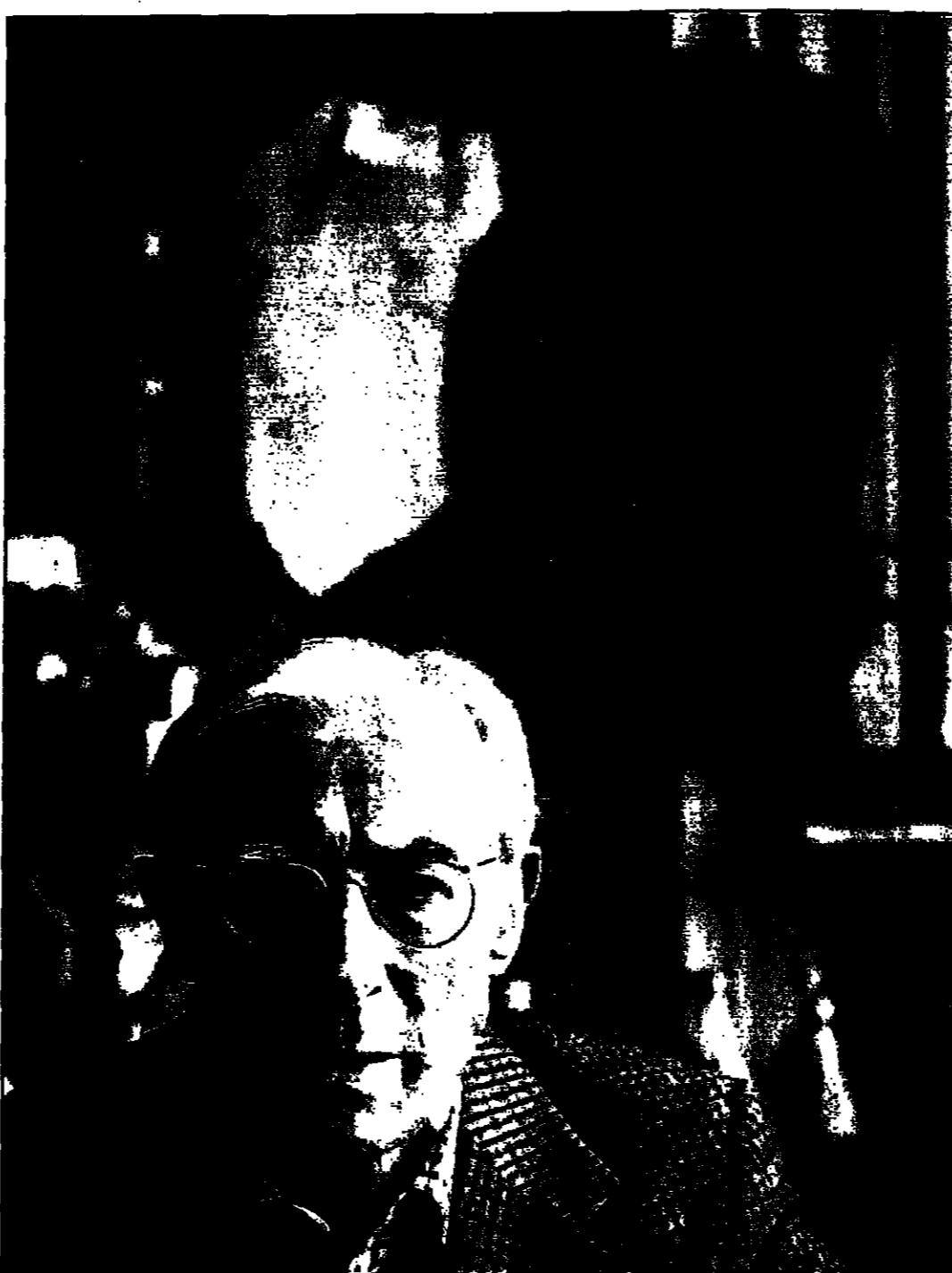
A gifted linguist, he learnt Swahili and, from the camp inmates, fluent Italian. He became a passionate lover of Italy and the Italians, frequently visiting the country and maintaining friendships made in

'How is that blazzy painter,' wrote Dylan Thomas, 'that lightning artist, that prodigal canvas stammer?'

the camp for the rest of his life. He made no paintings during the war.

Back in Swansea in 1946, he returned to painting and teaching. During this period he made memorable portraits of Vernon Watkins and Daniel Jones. In 1953 the Janes and their young son (a daughter was born the following year) moved to the rambling and then remote Nicholas Hall, a hillside manor house overlooking the sea on the Gower Peninsula, where he used the barn for his studio, and embarked upon a series of experimental works using sand, various oils (including Castro) and hardboard.

The rigours of the country life, however, did not really suit this most urbane of artists, and in 1963, invited to take up a post at Croydon School of Art, he moved to Dulwich, where he lived happily for the rest of his life. Of teaching, Janes wrote, "It is perhaps the best thing we can



If what comes out is art, that's a bonus!

Glyn Griffiths

do - certainly for me, a great pleasure and a very great privilege." Down to earth and absolutely without affectation, he was an inspired teacher, remembered by students and colleagues alike with respect and affection.

At Croydon he was famous for the meticulous care he took to construct the still-lifes, placing fruit and fish, jugs and fabrics to most effectively test and develop the students' perceptions of light, colour and form. Fred Janes took to his teaching a formidable knowledge of techniques, learnt in his own experimental practice and generously shared, and great theoretical knowledge of colour and of the psychology and philosophy of perception.

As painter and draughtsman Janes was wonderfully able to catch at the likeness of life, to make a picture of the arts, playing the piano every day, and, like his close friend Ceri Richards, he saw close parallels be-

tween composing and painting. He was above all a committed modernist, his denial of signature style and personal gesture a critical and creative abnegation, as well as the expression of a natural modesty and self-effacement. He described himself as "a maker of pictures, rather than a painter". "I concentrate on the craft," he once said, "and if what comes out is art, that's a bonus."

Time will confirm that many of the pictures he has made are indeed art of a high order. His art celebrates, sometimes with the ironic wit so characteristic of the man, sometimes in comic mood, sometimes with a surprising poetic lyricism, the infinite variety of the world as given.

MEL GOODING

Alfred George Janes, artist; born Swansea 30 June 1911; married Mary Ross (one son, one daughter); died London 3 February 1999.

Lesley Maber

THE REMOTE village of Champon-sur-Lignon at the northern end of the Cévennes has become the symbol of everything that was finest in occupied France.

Elsewhere there was betrayal or simple acceptance. But in Le Champon, as it was called, there was a resistance to the persecution of the Jews that recalled the Huguenots of past times resisting their own persecution. The commune of Champon was Protestant and its pastor, André Trocmé, made it into a purposeful force. In 1990 it became the first community to be honoured as Righteous Gentiles by the Yad Vashem Holocaust Authority in Jerusalem.

Lesley Maber, who was English, was one of the heroines of Le Champon. Women were particularly important in the village. It normally housed a population of about 1,000 people, with perhaps double that number living in surrounding farms and hamlets. Yet some 5,000 Jews were sheltered there, and whilst some could be crammed into cellars and attics, many of them were scattered over a wide area. In the neighbourhood there were also resistance groups, particularly from the beginning of 1943, when young men took to the hills rather than be conscripted for work in Germany.

The school had always had a

number of Jewish pupils. After the armistice of 1940 their numbers increased, partly because of Pastor Trocmé's regulation of opposition to the Vichy government's early anti-Jewish legislation, partly because it was an ideal place for refuge. Soon organisations for the care of refugees and other Christian and Jewish welfare agencies were establishing lines of escape through the convents of Savoie to crossing points into Switzerland, so that Le Champon was also part of the process of escape.

Lesley Maber played a full part in the life of this community. As Magda Trocmé, the pastor's wife, used her boy scouts in order to keep in touch with everyone, Lesley Maber had her girl guides. She knew the dangers of her situation. She saw the Gestapo arrest Daniel Trocmé, cousin of the pastor. He was taken away, to die in Majdanek. She herself was arrested and put on a train to an internment camp. But representations were made to the Prefect of the department, the Haute Loire. When he learned how some years earlier she had adopted two children who had been abandoned by their prostitute mother, he ordered that she should be released. The order was received in time. She left the

train before it was diverted to Germany and its passengers sent to a terrible destination.

She returned to Le Champon and continued to work as a teacher, nurse, distributor of food and false papers, contact with resistance groups and all the other tasks that befell this resolute woman, who after the liberation of France in 1944 rarely spoke of what she had done.

However she was angered by those whom she had helped write about Le Champon (such as the American academic Philip Hallie and the film-maker Pierre Sauvage) when they suggested that Le Champon was able to exist because of the benevolent attitude of the local German commander. It was true that some of the French police were particularly understanding. Another of Le Champon's heroines, Madeline Barde, liked to explain how, when the French gendarmes had to make an arrest, they would stop in the café and discuss their intentions in loud voices. Half an hour later they would effect surprise to find that their intended victim had disappeared. But this comedy was not played by the Germans. Lesley Maber sought to put the record straight by writing her own memoirs, but she did not publish them and she has confided

them to her nephew, Dr Richard Maber of Durham University.

After the war she worked in a French factory, then returned to the Collège Cévenol, where she taught until 1971. Thus there were many generations of French schoolchildren and their parents who had every reason to remember her with affection. She was one of them, with all the qualities of devotion, courage and spirituality that are admired, whether one is French or British.

DOUGLAS JOHNSON

Gladys Lesley Maber, teacher and wartime resister; born Crediton, Devon 20 July 1906; died Farnborough, Hampshire 6 January 1999.

AS A member of the illustrious and world famous Hungarian sabre team during the Fifties and Sixties, Rudolf Karpati played an important part in his country's domination of international fencing over many years.

Karpati competed in four Olympic Games, winning six gold medals - team golds in 1948, 1952, 1956 and 1960. He also won seven World Championship titles.

He was born in Budapest in 1920 and studied at the Hungarian Acad-

emy of Music; he became a musicologist by profession, while continuing to pursue his sport. He dominated the sport at home, becoming Champion of Hungary prior to his international achievements. In 1965 he published his autobiography in Hungarian, entitled "Around the World with a Sword".

Although originally of the old fencing school based on the solid foundation of firm footwork and lighting but controlled parry-ripostes, Karpati very soon adopted a more fluid style. This enabled him to deal effectively with the emerging athletically mobile tactics of Italian and French sabreurs.

Karpati was the model sabre fencer: tall, wholly confident and self-contained. He was always quiet and polite to those who succumbed to his impeccable timing, his extraordinary efficient parrying was followed by ripostes no more complicated than absolutely necessary.

It was indeed an experience and a privilege for me to fence against Rudolf Karpati on several occasions including the 1956 Olympic Games

Philip Fielden

IN ONE of those perceptive reports which come from housemasters at Eton, Philip Fielden's abilities were described as not those of a scholar, although he worked hard and had a great gift of concentration: "I have a very high opinion of his character. I have never had the slightest reason not to trust him implicitly. I think he has a very sane judgement: he has great personal charm." As a soldier and horseman, fisherman and picture-framer, Fielden was to prove C.A. Gladstone prophetically accurate.

From 1937 to 1939 Fielden was up at Magdalen College, Oxford, where he rode and danced, joined the OTC and the Gridiron Club, was elected to the Bullingdon, and in the long vacation of 1938, learnt German with the families of Lehndorff and Stein of Steinort in east Prussia. His experience of the Germans was that they "are law-abiding, not sheep-like; they have high ideals of honesty and honour".

Here is an early indication of the way in which Fielden could surprise the unilitary-minded. He had a good mind, which could be sharp and incisive. He learnt to express himself clearly, notably in his 1991 memoirs, *Swings and Roundabouts*. There he recorded going back to Magdalen to receive his degree in 1976 "in exchange for the modest sum of £7 (£3 for the degree and £4 for the hire of cap and gown)." Meeting someone older than himself he said, "I am here, sir, because my studies were interrupted before I could take a degree, by the Second World War." "Funny you should say that," he replied, "I am here because my studies were interrupted by the First World War." This was Sir Austin Strutt, who lived at Slough Manor. In his youth, he told me, the manor had been surrounded by wooded parkland. Now, he related wryly, at the end of one foreshortened drive stood the Odeon Cinema, while the back premises lay in the shadow of Marks and Spencer's.

For instance, Fielden listed five factors:

i) the horse should have the experience of at least one race before he is ready to be asked for the supreme effort; ii) that the horse will require one or more races before he would be fit enough to be asked to go and win; iii) that the steward wants to see your horse perform against horses with known form before he can advise you (the owner) to back your horse with confidence to win; iv) that he may wish to give the horse a preparatory race or races so that he will be ready to win when you return from your holiday in Bermuda; or v), that he may consider the handicapper has taken the measure of your horse.

Sadly his account of the race, "Salisbury on 1 July 1970, Weyhill Stakes, five furlongs", was considered too controversial to publish. It was a tour de force "but events had moved far out of the sphere of stipes".

Fishing, pre-eminently for salmon with a fly, meant as much to Fielden as horses. He first went to Norway in 1933, to Flak at the head of the Bangsund fjord, 40 minutes' walk to the river Bongo, where he acquired experience and confidence. He recalled the vast pool at the top of the river Bolstad which was "virtually unsinkable". He loved the element of privacy, and deplored the over-fishing due to "greed" of which the Norwegians complain today.

The Slaney in Co Wexford and rivers in Styria, for trout, followed. Forty years later he tried Chile for rainbow trout on the Lago Velcho, and Argentina on the river Traful. Winter fishing in the Southern Hemisphere appealed, and, after two unsuccessful visits, he and his wife had as a stipendiary steward, and a natural modesty.

He was back with his squadron for the break through after El Alamein and recalled a November 1942 when they "leaguered in absolute quiet, a strange contrast to the conditions under which we had spent the last 10 days" and on to the cessation of hostilities in North Africa in May 1943. Thereafter he served in Italy, and, on 8 June 1944, landed in Normandy before going to Staff College in 1945. Here he discovered that he could express himself on paper with "reasonable fluency" as *Swings and Roundabouts* was to confirm.

After serving with General Miles Dempsey, to whom he was devoted, in the Far East, and then in Cairo, Fielden was posted to Berlin in 1947 and his subsequent service in the British Zone was lightened by race meetings and horseshows.

In 1952 Fielden decided to look for a horse which he could ride in the Grand Military Gold Cup Steeplechase and had the good fortune to run into Major Charles Radcliffe. Thus there were many generations of French schoolchildren and their parents who had every reason to remember her with affection. She was one of them, with all the qualities of devotion, courage and spirituality that are admired, whether one is French or British.

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Hulton Getty

Rudolf Karpati

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in Melbourne and in Rome in 1960 as well as at several World Championships. He also kindly came to London in May 1968, along with three other international fencers, for a Gala at the National Sporting Club to help raise funds for the new Amateur Fencing Association building. Until comparatively recently the complicated nature of sabre fencing - in which hits can be made with both edges of the weapon as well as its point - has prevented the introduction of an electrified scoring system, which has been in use for several decades for the sister events of épée and foil. Before electrical devices, sabre required four judges in addition to the President, and consequently a very particular technique on the part of the fencer. With the advent of the new system, there is no doubt that we shall never again see the like of Rudolf Karpati.

A. RALPH COOPERMAN

Rudolf Karpati, fencer and musicologist; born Budapest 17 July 1920; married (two children); died 1 February 1998.



Keisuke Kinoshita

ALTHOUGH AKIRA Kurosawa is the better-known film director in the West, in Japan Keisuke Kinoshita is revered as the greater genius, and the 50 or so films he made display a much wider variety of styles and themes, all expertly handled, than do Kurosawa's.

Kinoshita's work was a perpetual reflection of his whole philosophy of living, an idealism rare in the modern world whose ugliness and cruelty he despised and mocked in satirical comedies and heart-breaking tragedies. His aim as a director and scenario writer - he wrote nearly all his own scripts - was to preserve the purity and sense of beauty he had been taught to admire in boyhood.

While Kurosawa excelled in depicting male characters, Kinoshita specialised in sensitively directed parts for women, many of which were played by his favourite actress, Hideko Takamine. In her amusing 1984 autobiography, *Wadashima Toshi Nidki ("Journal of the Way I Live")*, she pays tribute to his inspired direction, but adds that he did not really like women.

In the summer of 1986 the first wide-ranging retrospective of his films was shown to an international audience, in the Swiss town of Locarno. I had followed his work from my first arrival in Japan in 1958, and so had seen a dozen or so of his films before he gave up the cinema for television after *Nostalgia for Flutes and Drums* in 1967. When he was persuaded to return to film-making in 1976 for *Sri Lanka no Ati to Wakare ("Love and Heartbreak in Sri Lanka")* his heart was no longer in the subject, and among the four more late works he produced, the 1983 *Konoko o Nokoshite ("Children of Nagasaki")* was the only memorable one.

The Locarno Festival was an occasion to see some of his early movies, which were a revelation. Among the best-known in the West are the over-sentimental ("three-handkerchief") weepie starring Hideko Takamine, *Nijushi no Hitomi ("Twenty-four Eyes")*, 1954, based on the popular novel by Taibou Sakae, and *Norayama Bushiyo ("Ballad of Narayama")*, 1958, based on the controversial novel by Shichiro Fukazawa. Another full-scale retrospective of Kinoshita's work is ardently to be desired.

He was born in 1912, in Shizuoka Prefecture, in the city of Hamamatsu, where his parents ran a grocery store. From an early age, he was crazy about movies, and it has been said that he was the only Japanese director who was born to the cinematic art. From the age

of eight, his one desire was to direct films, and he rebelled against the attempts of his parents to make him study for a university career.

When Hamamatsu became the location for a new movie, a period film, the actors used to patronise his parents' shop, and that is how he came to know the actor Jimosuke Bando, who ran away with him to Kyoto, then the capital of period film-making. His grandfather brought him back home, and his parents finally gave in to his ambition to become a director. But Kinoshita had to learn the art from the bottom up before he could even be considered by the studios.

So he worked in a photographer's shop in Tokyo, and entered the Oriental Photography School, from which he eventually graduated in 1933. He at once applied to be taken on by the Shochiku film company, and started in the film processing laboratory, until he at last became camera assistant to the chief cinematographer, Yasujiro Shimazu. When the latter became a director, he took on Kinoshita as his assistant.

Kinoshita later described Shimazu's working methods: "He relied heavily upon intuition, and didn't like to have everything calculated, and fixed in advance." This was to become Kinoshita's own light-handed, easy-going directional manner; relying on last-minute inspirations and sudden insights into character.

When the Second World War broke out, he served for a while in the army, but was sent back to Shochiku to write propaganda scripts, a task he hated, until at last he was promoted to director in 1943. It had been a long battle to reach this position, but now he had to contend with the stupidities of wartime censors. His first script was rejected as "not sufficiently patriotic" but he had better luck with the Information Ministry when they accepted *Hana Saku Minato ("Flower-Blossom Port")* set in the southern port town of Amakusa.

He was allowed a generous 40 days on location, and 20 in the studio, and this first feature showed immense promise. There is a charming evocation of the picturesque port, and what was to become typical dramatic and satirical confrontation between the pure-spirited country folk and cynical city schemers, between youthful love and exploitation of the innocent by hardened criminals. In the end, purity triumphs and the crooks are defeated in a comic turn-around.

City and country are again contrasted in the 1951 *Korumen Kotyo ni*



'Carmen Comes Home' was the first Japanese film shot in colour. In the tremendous heat the girls' heavy make-up kept melting and smoke started to rise from their pomaded hair

Kaeru ("Carmen Comes Home"). Hideko Takamine, cast against her usual serious, intelligent type of young woman, plays a country girl who has run away from home to become a strip-tease dancer in Tokyo. She makes a surprise return home, accompanied by her stripe-tease colleague, to give the natives the shock of their lives. The shock to the villagers can be imagined when Carmen and her friend get off the train wearing high heels, fantastic modern fashions in brilliant hues, heavy make-up and actually smoking cigarettes in fingers scarlet with nail varnish. The outraged

village headmaster, played superbly by the great Ryu Chishu, is gradually won round by the girls when they give a benefit performance to help rebuild his school.

One reason why the girls' make-up is so heavy is that this was the first Japanese film shot in colour. In those days, great trouble had to be taken to keep constant lighting levels, and each actor had a different tone of make-up. Ryu Chishu's complexion came out looking rust-red, and in the tremendous heat of both natural sunshine and artificial light, the girls' sunshine make-up kept melting and smoke even started to rise from their pomaded hair. Kinoshita had to start shooting a black-and-white version, just in case the final print of the colour film was a failure. Fortunately, it came out very well.

Kinoshita took the film to Europe, where he stayed for a while in 1951. He met René Clair; whose light touch in comedy he greatly admired, though he also was devoted to the works of Julien Duvivier and Jean Renoir - the latter's *The River* in particular, which influenced his own *Fusukigawa ("River Feud")*, 1960.

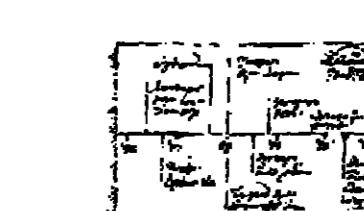
"The Ballad of Narayama" is the only other Kinoshita masterpiece to have been shown in Europe. It appeared on French television in 1996. Kinoshita was a devotee of the traditional theatre, and wanted to make a film reflecting those ancient dramatic techniques. An old peasant woman, as ancient tradition demanded, asks her son to carry her to the top of a mountain and expose her there to die, so that the poverty-stricken village will have one less mouth to feed.

There is a horrifying scene when she knocks her teeth out with a rock, so as not to be tempted to eat the food left to her and to stay alive a few days longer all alone. Kinoshita's handling of colour is masterly, and his sweeping panoramic shots of the mountains are sheer lyricism. Kabuki techniques are imitated, with painted interior sets, use of curtains, transformations, narrators.

It was an epoch-making event in the history of Japanese film-making, and only Kinoshita could have achieved such a sensitive combination of emotion and image, and such an inventive use of old dramatic conventions in a thoroughly modern use of film. This will undoubtedly be the masterpiece by which he will always be remembered.

JAMES KIRKUP

Keisuke Kinoshita, film director: born Hamamatsu, Japan 5 December 1912; died Tokyo 30 December 1998.



HISTORICAL NOTES

RICHARD BREITMAN

Official secrets of the Final Solution

ON 28 JANUARY American officials announced that they had intercepted conversations among senior Serbian officials about a massacre of 45 civilians in Kosovo. This evidence, they stated, demonstrated the need for an international war crimes investigation. It remains to be seen whether the announcement of near-perfect evidence of Serbian war crimes and the threat of punishment will work against Serbian officials. But open use of intercepted communications as a weapon against ethnic cleansing represents something of a reversal of the Second World War experience.

During the war Britain was able to intercept and decode tens of thousands of German police and SS radio messages. In 1997 the Public Record Office at Kew made transcripts of these messages available, along with some British intelligence analyses of Nazi operations on the Eastern front. These documents cast new light on the murderous activities of the German Order Police, which scholars of Nazi Germany had underestimated until the 1990s. New evidence also indicates that British intelligence had recognised a systematic Nazi policy of exterminating Jews by early 1942, before this information arrived in the West from other sources.

The "final solution of the Jewish question" was originally one of the great secrets of the Nazi regime. Officially, Nazi Germany was merely resettling Jews in Eastern Europe and using them for labour: deception of the victims was sometimes maintained until the moment of mass murder.

The idea of using information (combined with political-diplomatic pressure against Germany's allies and satellites) to try to save lives during the Second World War is not a matter of hindsight; it was done on a limited basis relatively late in the war. But the earliest and best wartime evidence of Nazi killings - never was used at all, even though Britain did not have to compromise the secrecy of its code-breaking operations. It might have simply endorsed other reports about Nazi policies that reached the Government or the public.

The opportunity for Allied military intervention against the Holocaust was limited. All the Allied powers faced desperate military difficulties of their own in 1942. Neither Britain nor the US gave much thought to military operations to rescue or aid Nazi victims until the Allied invasion of France had succeeded more than two years later.

But military action was not the only possible Allied response. If the Allies had demonstrated earlier that the fate of Jews mattered to them, alerting potential victims and rescuers, warning Nazi collaborators, urging neutral countries not to turn away Jews seeking to escape the Nazi vise, tens of thousands more lives would likely have been saved.

Richard Breitman is the author of *Official Secrets: what the Nazis planned, what the British and Americans knew* (Penguin, £20).

GAZETTE

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

BIRTHS

LINDSLEY: To Clare and Ian, on 2 February 1999, at Kingston Hospital, a girl, Imogen Colleen, a beautiful sister to Phoebe, Isabella and Poppy.

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

The Princess Royal, President, the Prince Royal Trust for Carers, today attends the press launch of the Great Scottish Walk, at the Palace of Holyroodhouse, Edinburgh; and, as Patron, Scottish Rugby Union, attends the Scotland versus Wales International Match at Murrayfield Stadium, Edinburgh.

CHANGING OF THE GUARD

TODAY: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am; No 7 Company Coldstream Guards mounts the Queen's Guard at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am, band provided by the Welsh Guards. TOMORROW: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 10am.

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, Wedding anniversaries, In memoriam) are charged at £6.50 a line (VAT extra). OTHER Gazette announcements (notices, functions, forthcoming marriages, Birthdays, which must be submitted in writing, are charged at £10 a line. VAT extra.

BIRTHDAYS

TODAY: The Right Rev Edwin Barnes, Bishop Suffragan of Richmond, 64; Mr Mike Batt, popular music composer and arranger, 49; Rabbi Lionel Blue, broadcaster, 69; Mr Nicholas Brett, former editor, *Radio Times*, 49; Mr Peter Cadbury, former company chairman, 81; Mr John Flemming, Warden, Wadham College, Oxford, 58; Miss Zsa Zsa Gabor, actress, 79; Mr Tom Harris, former ambassador to Korea, 54; Dr Christopher Hill, former Master, Balliol College, Oxford, 87; Miss Gayle Hunnicut, actress, 56; Mr Nevil Johnson, political scientist, 70; Mr Patrick Mcnee, actor, 77; Mr George Mudie MP, Treasurer of HM Household, 54; Mr Denis Norden, writer and broadcaster, 77; Mr Manuel Orantes, tennis player, 50; Mr Ronald Reagan, former US president, 88; Mr Tom Richardson, ambassador to Italy, 58; Mr Mark Sheldon, solicitor and former president, Law Society of England and Wales, 68; Mr Brian Simpson, MEP, 46; Mr Jimmy Tarbuck, comedian, 59; Mr Fred Trueman, cricketer, 68; Mr Keith Waterhouse, writer, 70; Mr Kevin Whately, actor, 48.

TOMORROW: Mrs Gillian Banks, policy consultant, Age Concern, England, 66; Lord Bellwin, former government minister, 76; Mr Eddie Bracken, actor, 79; Mr David Brighty, former ambassador to Spain, 60; Miss Dora Bryan, actress, 75; The Earl of Cork and Orrery, writer, artist and broadcaster, 89; Mr Gerald Davies, rugby player, 54; The Earl of Harewood, former operatic managing director, 76; Mr Gareth Hunt, actor, 56; Mr Ian Jack, editor, *Granada*, 54; The Hon Peter Jay, writer and broadcaster, 62; Lord Keith of Kinkel, former Lord of Appeal in Ordinary, 77; Mr Derek Langslow, chief executive,

English Nature, 54; Sir John Leahy, former High Commissioner in Australia, 71; Dr Barbara McGibbon, pathologist, 71; Sir George Moseley, former senior civil servant, 74; Sir Geoffrey Mulcahy, chairman, Kingfisher, 57; Sir Philip Myers, former HM Inspector of Constabulary, 68; Mr David Park, writer, 46; Mr Roy Watson, former director-general, the National Farmers' Union, 73.

ANNIVERSARIES

TODAY: Christopher Marlowe, playwright, 1564; Antoine Arnauld, theologian, 1612; Queen Anne, 1688; Ugo Foscolo, novelist and poet, 1778; Sir Henry Irving (John Henry Brodrick), actor, 1838; Isabella Mary Beeton (Mayson), cookery writer, 1851; Jan van Huysum, painter, 1749; Daniel Niklaus Chodowiecki, painter and engraver, 1801; Pope Pius IX, 1878; Adolf Sax, inventor of the saxophone, 1843; Thomas Sidney Cooper, painter, 1902. On this day: Edward of Caernarvon (later King Edward II) was created Prince of Wales, 1301; while visiting the British Museum, William Lloyd smashed the first-century Portland Vase, 1845; the main group of the Dead Sea Scrolls was discovered, 1947. Tomorrow is the Feast Day of St Adelanus, St Luke the Younger, St Moses, St Richard, "king", St Silvin and St Theodore of Heraclea.

LECTURES

TODAY: National Gallery: "Love & Rembrandt, *Saskia van Uylenghur in Arcadian Costume*", 12 noon. Victoria and Albert Museum: Sorrel Heseltine, "European Arts and Crafts", 2pm. British Museum: Nicole Douek, "Empire Builders of Ancient Egypt", 11.30am;

Nicole Douek, "Egypt and Nubia", 1.30pm. Tate Gallery: Laurence Bradbury, "A Lesson in Looking at the Mysterious Ivan Lermontov", 1pm. National Portrait Gallery: Valerie Holman, "Bloomsbury Portraits", 3pm.

TOMORROW

Births: St Thomas More, 1478; Thomas Killigrew, playwright, 1612; Charles John Huffam Dickens, novelist, 1812; Franz Friedrich Richard Genée, conductor and composer, 1823; Sir William Huggins, astronomer, 1824; Dmitri Ivanovich Mendeleev, chemist, 1834; Harry Sinclair Lewis, novelist, 1885. Deaths: James Stewart, second Earl of Moray, murdered 1591; Jan van Huysum, painter, 1749; Daniel Niklaus Chodowiecki, painter and engraver, 1801; Pope Pius IX, 1878; Adolf Sax, inventor of the saxophone, 1843; Thomas Sidney Cooper, painter, 1902. On this day: Edward of Caernarvon (later King Edward II) was created Prince of Wales, 1301; while visiting the British Museum, William Lloyd smashed the first-century Portland Vase, 1845; the main group of the Dead Sea Scrolls was discovered, 1947. Tomorrow is the Feast Day of St Adelanus, St Luke the Younger, St Moses, St Richard, "king", St Silvin and St Theodore of Heraclea.

Due to the limited seating capacity of St George's Chapel, William Lloyd smashed the first-century Portland Vase, 1845; the main group of the Dead Sea Scrolls was discovered, 1947. Tomorrow is the Feast Day of St Adelanus, St Luke the Younger, St Moses, St Richard, "king", St Silvin and St Theodore of Heraclea.

Due to the limited seating capacity of St George's Chapel, tickets for the service and reception will be restricted to members of the Royal Victorian Order and holders of the Royal Victorian Medal only. Please do not apply for tickets for spouses, or other guests. Honorary members and medalists are not eligible to attend.

Members of the order and medalists who wish to attend should apply for a ticket as soon as possible, and not later than Friday 12 March, clearly stating their name, address and grade within the order. They should also state if they require a parking permit. Application should be made to the Registrar of the Royal Victorian Order, The Central Chancery of the Orders of Knighthood, St James's Palace, London SW1 1BH.

The definition of a cult seems to have more to do with the relations between the members and the society around them. Sacred cows are part of a religion in Uttar Pradesh. But when you see them cropping peacefully in the Hertfordshire commuter belt, you know you have found the Hare Krishnas' mansion. Though the movement is organised, and a religion can find universities.

By this token, European Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, Confucianism and possibly Hinduism are certainly religions. I know there are American fundamentalist universities. Ian Paisley got his doctorate from one, but that's not the only reason for distrusting them. The US also have a University of the

SOME PEOPLE have problems believing God exists. Mine is slightly different: I don't believe in religions. For when you look closely at the concept of "religion" it becomes almost as diffuse as the notion of "Anglicanism".

There is no single practice or belief which is always and only religious. Neither is there any guarantee that "religious" ideas have anything in common with each other - not even that they can all grow in the fertile soil that is the skull of a football manager. Yet the word is a useful one. It does mean something important to say that Europe is entering a post-religious age, though it clearly does not mean that we are entering an age of rationality or even of unbound credulity.

A way round the difficulty is to talk about "organised religion" but I think this is just weasel-ish because organisation is one of the defining qualities of a serious religion, without which it cannot long persist. We don't normally talk about "nourishing food" or "mothers with children" - and "organised religion" is a similar tautology.

What makes a religion "organised" is more than simply discipline. The boundary between religions and cults may be obscure and fuzzy, but it certainly exists. There are cults and sects which are far more fervently disciplined than traditional forms of Christianity. There are some which seem to have emerged from that state to become full-blown religions: Mormonism comes to mind. But there is movement in both directions, as other fragments of established religions sink into cult-hood, like some of the wackier Pentecostal churches, with their belief in divinely inspired leaders.

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Hamburger, and I don't think that's part of a religion either. A proper university cannot be fundamentalist, since fundamentalism is a 19th-century reaction to the discovery that knowledge and religious truth may be incompatible. A real university can't be so afraid that it can only go out into the world wearing blinkers. A friend of mine taught for a while at an Islamic University in Malaysia, and found the experience completely satisfying simply because everything thought or taught had to be checked to see if it drifted into forbidden territories.

Religions need more than unself-conscious intellectual confidence if they are to launch universities. They need money, libraries and learning have always been expensive, even if scholars are cheap. And they need the confidence of the society surrounding them. A university is not a vocational college. It's not even a seminary. It is something which is recognised to benefit the whole of the society surrounding it. All of these are resources which are beyond cults, almost by definition. They are certainly beyond disorganized spirituality. A university of the New Age would be as much use as a Hamburg University, even if there were anything solid to study there.

The links between Western European Christianity and the universities have collapsed almost completely. I think that Cardinal Newman was the last man to attempt to found a religious university in these islands, and certainly the idea would never occur to anyone today. This is perhaps the most concrete meaning that can be attached to the idea of a post-religious society. This distinction has the further advantage of holding even in Eastern Europe, where religion is alive partly because its connection with universities remains organic. Which explains why a former Polish university professor like Pope John Paul II, who really believes that a university without religion has lost its soul, thinks in ways which seem so completely alien to most Western intellectuals.

FAITH & REASON

Lost in translation

Michael Hamburger's huge contribution to our knowledge of German literature – his versions of Günter Grass's poetry are about to appear – has obscured his own reputation as a poet. By Michael Glover

This is the story of a literary life, translated from the German. In 1933, the year of Hitler's accession to power, a nine-year-old German boy called Michael Hamburger, one of four children from a prosperous, upper-middle-class Jewish family, left Berlin for Edinburgh with his parents and siblings, to escape from the possibility of persecution and death. Little by little, the boy became an Englishman. He went to prep school, Westminster public school, and Oxford. He served as a humble private among working-class squaddies in the British Army – his father had received the Iron Cross for distinguished service in the German Army.

After the war, Hamburger, a dreamy, introspective, book-saturated youth, pursued a peripatetic literary life, teaching in universities, writing poems, essays, works of literary criticism. He also became the best, and best known, translator of German poetry into English of the post-war years, tackling some of the most daunting texts imaginable – the works of the 19th-century schizophrenic poet Friedrich Hölderlin, for example, and the poems of Paul Celan, whose intensely private and tortured holocaust-haunted lyrics are some of the hardest peaks that any translator might ever be tempted to scale. Almost untranslatable, you might think – except by someone like Hamburger, who has devoted years of his life, on and off, to doggedly unpicking their monstrously tangled threads.

Hamburger is both proud to have served as a conduit for the great German-speaking writers he has translated, and also intensely irritated when yet another critic describes him, in print, as "best known as a translator from the German..." In fact, he squirms in his carver as I mention the fact to him.

We are sitting, facing each other, in the study of his long, rambling patchwork of a house – part Tudor, part 17th century, part 1920s – just outside a village in East Suffolk. It is early afternoon. The light is bleached out, watery, already failing. He has just come in from the lane, having dealt with a steaming heap of horse manure. Just perfect for the grapevine, he's said to his wife as he worked away with his shovel.

Now a cat is sleeping, idly post-prandial, on the window seat; beside a new edition of *The Truth of Poetry* and many others of his books, all leaning sideways as if a little weary too. Beyond the bay window is his garden and orchard, all three-and-a-half acres of it, teeming with plum, mulberry, yew, alder, and, his great pride and joy, a collection of rare species of apple

tree, including two that came from Ted Hughes's garden in Devon – Devonshire Quarrenden, he tells me later; a dark red, almost purple apple. The pond, alas, has no fish in it. The heron saw to that.

"The thing is," he rasps at me – he will be 75 in March, and, though a little deaf now, manual work keeps him quick and sprightly when he moves about, bounding over tussocky grass, or zipping from room to room in search of books to prove a point or illustrate an argument – "they use all this talk about me as a translator as an excuse for not reading my own poems properly, and also as a way of disparaging them. It doesn't make any difference what I'm better known for. The fact is that I've been writing my own poems since I was 14 or 15, and for me, it's my main activity. Translating is a skill, something which I can practise the whole time, whereas I can't write poems the whole time." It's a hectored

'I have separated translation from my writing. It has always been a kind of service'

tone of voice, a voice accustomed to fighting its corner. His fiercely disciplined hair sweeps straight back from his forehead.

A skill? Merely a skill? I query. Had it not in fact been a lifelong compulsion? (He started translating Hölderlin as a schoolboy, at the age of 16, and has continued to revise his own versions over a period of 60 years...) And what is more, hadn't it held him back, and perhaps even frustrated him, as a poet in his own right, the fact that he had all these other voices clamouring for attention, and for imaginative space, inside his own head?

"No, not at all," he insisted. "I have separated it entirely from my own writing. To me it is, and always has been, a kind of service. It may have been a very strong psychological need though as you say – which is now less strong than it was when I was young. Perhaps that was to do with the fact that I myself had been translated from one culture to another..." Suddenly, he glances down.

"Hello, puss..." He looks up at me again, as does the cat. "The family call her Cinnamon, but I just call her Pussy." He is careful to give that word two quite distinct syllables. "I don't give cats names." The cat, mildly disturbed – if not annoyed – by this excess of attention, bolts.

This month sees the publication of

Michael Hamburger's translations of the selected poems of his old friend Günter Grass – the very last project of this kind, he tells me. When he was younger, he felt that he had a kind of continuing responsibility for German literature, to translate it and to write about it. Not any more, though. He has translated all the poets he wanted to translate. Now his mental space is entirely his own. I notice an etching by Grass hanging on the wall – are those figures moving in profile? They are almost too elusive to identify in the dying light of this room.

What is the one thing that all these German-language writers have in common? I ask him. In what exactly does the Germanness of German writing consist? He's completely stumped by the question at first. He doesn't want to generalise. He taps at the arm of his chair with a thick horny fingernail. Then finally he begins to hazard a guess.

"Well, they've always been found extremely strange by English readers – even when they were first discovered by the Coleridge and Wordsworth generation, and a little later, by Carlyle. And this strangeness has to do with their introspectiveness, I think. They were alienated from society to a much greater extent than their English counterparts. And they invented, of course, that strange thing called the *Bildungsroman*, which was supposed to trace the integration of an individual into society – as though society and the individual were two entirely different things, and you had to make a great effort to integrate yourself into it." He gives a quick and harsh laugh. "Whereas everybody in England always felt themselves to be a member of society, however much they may have disliked certain aspects of it, or criticised it, or been in revolt against it."

I wonder how much this applies to Michael Hamburger himself? Is he inside now – or outside? Perhaps a little of both. Perhaps that is part of the challenge – and part of the affliction – of bilingualism, and of being translated as a child.

Then, our formal discussion over, we walk from room to room of this warren of a house, so fascinating and so strangely beautiful in its decrepitude, climbing up a narrow, dimly lit staircase so that I can inspect the ship's timbers from which the beams of one of the Tudor cottages were fashioned; staring at the foot-wide floorboards of a 17th-century room, "Oak," says Michael Hamburger, tapping at it with the point of his sturdy shoe. "It's such a marvellous wood. It goes on forever." Wood as the final guarantor of cultural continuity in a disposable age.

There are books, books, heaps of



Michael Hamburger: 'I've been writing my own poems since I was 14 or 15. It's my main activity'

envelopes, files of letters, here, there, everywhere. And, beneath the shelves of books, there are sometimes shelves of apples. Just look at all this!" he says. "Terrible! Terrible!" This can't be quite true though. This rummage of things represents a life of thought, argument, contention.

I ask him about his pattern of work. He's up at 7.30am in the winter months, earlier

still in the summer. If there's a poem underway, he'll work on it. If there's not, it's a matter of dealing with his voluminous correspondence. He writes replies to letters on the day that they're delivered, getting them back into the post-box before the postman's half-time to empty it.

Was TS Eliot right? I ask him before I brush past five or six stout walking sticks on my way out of the door. Is the literary

life a mug's game? "I can't say," he replies. "That is actually what it's all about: you can never be sure..."

Michael Hamburger's translation of Günter Grass's "Selected Poems 1956 to 1993" is published on 15 February by Faber, £9.99; Hamburger's "Collected Poems" was recently published in paperback by Anvil Press, £12.95

ARTS DIARY

DAVID LISTER

CALLING ALL actors mängler: get down to the Hampstead Theatre where there is a fascinating new development which I forecast will spread through theatres across the land and give hope to life's undergraduates. The theatre, which has a strict policy on not admitting latecomers until a suitable break, is to start giving the aforementioned latecomers a synopsis in the foyer of what they have missed. No matter what time they arrive, a staff member will duly give a synopsis up to that point. If only this could become common practice. It is a marvellous opportunity to a public audience, a chance to play the whole cast.

"Now, at this point Ewan McGregor gives that sexy smile to the front stalls, rather like this..." Of course, it would have taken a confident female member of staff to preëdict the first 20 minutes of Nicole Kidman in *The Blue Room*; a true man of the world to summarise the latest Irvine Welsh. But these are challenges underestimates should thrive on. And if the performance in the foyer is good enough, with a bar on hand as well, why bother to go into the auditorium at all?

THE NORMALLY effusive director of the Victoria and Albert Museum in an unusually curmudgeonly mood this week, writing in the V&A magazine that "the press can, and usually will, misinterpret everything". I for one shall take his rebuke to heart and try not to misinterpret in future. I do notice that the large news section of the magazine which goes to the V&A Friends fails to mention one of the big news stories emanating from the V&A in recent weeks, the highly

Only connect and all becomes clear

CLASSICAL

PIERRE BOULEZ:
A PORTRAIT
BBC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
RFH, LONDON

THE FRENCH CONNECTION
LONDON SINFONIETTA/
GEORGE BENJAMIN
QEII, LONDON

interval came "cummings ist der Dichter" and "Notations I-IV", the latter receiving a scintillating account.

The second half of Wednesday's concert saw the British premiere of an already revised version of Boulez's recent "sur Incises" (on incisions). Though the combination of three each of pianists, harpists and percussionists is enticing the alternation of basically static and fasted types of musical material in much clearer contours, both texturally and formally, could not sustain my interest during its now 40-minute span.

The premiere of Gerard Grisey's "Quatre chants pour franchir le seuil" (Four Songs for Crossing the Threshold), also 40 minutes long, made the Boulez appear lightweight. A "musical meditation on death", this sets four

fragmentary texts – from modern French, Ancient Egyptian, Greek and Mesopotamian sources – for soprano (Valdine Anderson, intense and captivatingly lyrical) and an unusual ensemble of 16 players. Linking these extended, repetitive settings with the rapt rustlings of percussion, Grisey weaves an, at times, almost unbearable moving course through his mostly desolate texts.

Despite the more diastolic oscillations of the concluding lullaby, the work nevertheless cannot ultimately bring much consolation. The composer's own death shortly after completing it must not be allowed to deprive us of more opportunities to hear his music in Britain than we had when he was alive.

KEITH POTTER

A light touch

THEATRE

TWELFTH NIGHT
THE VIADUCT, HALIFAX

are emotionally rootless. So when the decorations come down there is a starkness about *Twelfth Night*. But its beauty lies, of course, in the exact degree to which it is glimpsed through the prevailing lightlessness. There is a perfect such moment here when Paul Besterman's Feste sings the heart-stopping "What's to come is still unsure... Youth's a stuff will not endure" to Sir Toby and Sir Andrew, who sit glistening with the effort of concentration so recognisable in sentimental drunks. The different veins are visible, too, in the superb scenes between Helen Sheals's Olivia and Julie Livesey's Viola. At first pallid with cultivated grief, the tiny Sheals zooms into coquettish sexiness as she encounters the disguised Viola's urgency. In turn Livesey's

comically and touchingly amused and delighted to discover this evidence of her sexual power.

Surprisingly it is the play's darkest patch where the gulling of Malvolio goes beyond a joke, that carries least force. Barrie Rutter's patterned cardigan shows us the kind of stickler he is aiming for; but he always seems as though he can take a joke, so the eventual cruelty of his baiting lacks pain. The balance between him and Joshua Richards's Sir Toby and John Gully's brilliantly credible Sir Andrew has to be a fine one; here the weight is too much in favour of this two-man barny army. Together with last autumn's brilliant *Somson Agonistes*, Rutter's production shows how inventive and versatile Northern Broadsides has become.

JEFFREY WAINWRIGHT

The Viaduct, Dean Clough, Halifax until 6 February, 01422 369704; then touring

Smoke without fire

DANCE

PACO PEÑA FLAMENCO
DANCE COMPANY
PEACOCK THEATRE
LONDON

From this, Peña and Peter Bunyard have attempted to string some kind of scenario together about a conflicting duality about the Gypsies as the Muse or Musa (Cecilia Gomez) and her opposite, the elegant *Danza* (Mayte Bajo). The narrative is tenuous and haphazardly presented. The long scene depicting an Easter procession makes sense only if you know it echoes a painting not shown during the performance. The Muse is ultimately stabbed by her jealous lover; yet you could not tell this without reading the painter's biography in the programme beforehand. The company's leading male dancer, Angel Muñoz, represents the painter, but I haven't the faintest idea who the two other

men are, black cloaks and all. Better perhaps to concentrate on the music and dance.

Together they mirror Torres's two sides by alternating the desolate wail of flamenco with Ramon Medina's gentle modern folk songs. The nine dancers expand flamenco's percussive rhythms and rearing postures with freer broader shapes. In Mayte Bajo's solos these cross into ballet, as she unravels a series of turns, her bias-cut evening dress fluttering. Angel Muñoz looks as striking as on his previous visit, black Assyrian curls and eagle profile intact.

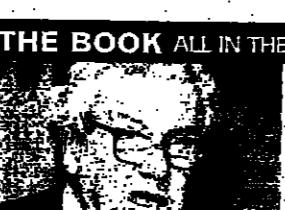
So why doesn't the air crackle with excitement? Because Javier Latorre's choreography rationals flamboyant virtuosity and prefers a long-winded lyricism. *Musa Gitana* is in the image of Peña, whose own muted stage presence is the antithesis of theatricality.

I felt I wanted my flamenco straight, with all its infectious clichés of noise and fire.

NADINE MESSNER

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

BY FIONA STURGES

OVERVIEW	CRITICAL VIEW	OUR VIEW	ON VIEW
THE FILM HIDEOUS KINKY 	Kate Winslet embarks on a voyage of self-discovery as she takes her two small daughters to Morocco in Gilles MacKinnon's adaptation of Esther Freud's novel.	"About as substantial as a joss stick," quipped Anthony Quinn, adding, "the film keeps setting up potential narrative lines and abandons them just as they threaten to become interesting." "Hippy nostalgia, stronger on scenery than story," decided the <i>Daily Mail</i> , while <i>The Guardian</i> found it "likeable but lightweight". "While the episodic incidents show zest, they rarely fuse into something more substantial," observed <i>Uncut</i> . "A movie of considerable subtlety and intelligence," gushed <i>Time Out</i> , continuing, "it's a perceptive look at love, responsibility and conflicting needs. Spot on." "A small marvel," cried <i>The Times</i> . "Charming," revealed <i>Elle</i> .	<i>Hideous Kinky</i> is on general release, certificate 15, 99 minutes
THE DANCE EDWARD II 	David Bintley choreographs the Birmingham Royal Ballet at Sadler's Wells in a performance based on Christopher Marlowe's dark tale of homosexuality and the struggle for power.	"It has been a long time coming to London, but it was worth the wait," revealed Nadine Meissner. "The action sweeps you up in its headlong rush like a tautly plotted thriller; even if it is at the expense of choreographical subtlety." "Fine, imaginative costumes from Jasper Conran complement Peter J. Davison's sleek, yet monolithic settings," declared <i>Time Out</i> .	Sensational set-pieces by Bintley are given tremendous support by his company. Conran's costumes provide an authentic air of sado-masochism while McCabe's score reinforces the drama's every twist.
THE EXHIBITION ANDREAS GURSKY 	Digitally-manipulated cityscapes, airports and alpine valleys are among the images on show in an exhibition by the German photographer, Andreas Gursky.	"Gursky's pictures aren't trying to pass themselves off as normal photos. They're trying to be super-photos, pictures that, through artifice, are excessively good at being the things a normal photo might wish to be," noted Tom Lubbock. "The beauty of these images is tempered by a pervading bleakness," decided <i>Time Out</i> . "Gursky shows how the camera's ever-expanding resources can convey a vision as unsettling and eloquent as any to be found in the art of our time," trilled <i>The Times</i> , while the <i>Evening Standard</i> found: "In spite of being so thoroughly staged and processed, Gursky's images look unquestionably real." "More like abstract paintings," muttered the <i>Sunday Times</i> .	While the abstraction of Gursky's images border on the painterly, the discernible manipulations are at once unnerving and compelling, bleak and beautiful.
THE TV PROGRAMME SEX AND THE CITY 	Sarah Jessica Parker stars in C4's latest import, <i>Sex and the City</i> , a new series that follows the fortunes of a group of New York professionals in their quest for a satisfactory sex life.	"Underneath the modern exterior, its view of sexual relationships seems dreadfully old-fashioned. Bolded down: it's a sex war, with women looking for Mr Right and men for anything they can get away with," observed Robert Hanks. "Wretchedly thin water... Unreflective reportage that teaches us nothing," reported the <i>Evening Standard</i> .	The series is only interested in the sexual mores of the rich, glamorous and thin, offering banal insight into the human condition. As conservative as a night in with Jerry and June.
THE BOOK ALL IN THE MIND: A FAREWELL TO GOD 	Ludovic Kennedy examines the history of faith and argues that God is a fictional character in his latest book <i>All in the Mind: A Farewell to God</i> .	"Kennedy's book is not an open-minded exploration of the role of 2,000 years of European faith; rather it is a vituperative polemic against the very business of belief," wrote Paul Valley. "It is not a work of philosophy, but the product of great experience and reflection," opined the <i>Sunday Telegraph</i> . "Perhaps some wavering theists will find Kennedy's voice of urbane fatuity just the call they were waiting for to join the A-team," remarked the <i>Evening Standard</i> . "Blessings on his atheist soul," Ludo points out that being a non-believer does not make you a bad person," said the <i>Daily Record</i> , while <i>The Daily Telegraph</i> uncovered "a pervasive sprinkling of errors".	Kennedy gathers a catalogue of Christianity's inconsistencies and conveys his (dis)belief like a true preacher, but his proselytising tone makes it hard to take the book seriously.
			<i>All in the Mind: A Farewell to God</i> by Ludovic Kennedy (Hodder & Stoughton) is now available in bookshops

EXIT POLL

VISUAL ARTS
PATRICK CAULFIELD
HAYWARD GALLERY
LONDON

GEORGE STUART
MCLEAREN
50, retired, London
"It's a fantastic exhibition. I was particularly interested in why the lighting is so dull when they are such bright pictures. It is like showing pop art in a dim light. Perhaps it's to make us take more meditation over the paintings."



MADELINE CAMPBELL
18, student, Swindon
"It was good to see his work over time. I admire the use of colour blocks, the balance between reality and abstraction. It struck me how the shapes are simple, monotonous black lines, and if they are coming out from within the colour. You are tempted to go close to the paintings, but you also have to stand at a distance to get the whole illusion."



MATT JOHNSON
26, illustrator, London
"I really loved it, especially the Seventies' period; the patterns, the textures and the wallpaper-effect. One thing that struck me is the influence of the Greek Spanish cubist posters which came and went. It is quite strong in the Seventies, particularly the way the paintings divide in to columns. It is a very graphic, powerful and unusual exhibition."



NATSUMI INOKUCHI
24, student, London
"I was surprised to see English art using such modern colours. It was interesting on so many levels; how it incorporates architecture, interiors, and is very scenic. And it seems rigid, but if you look closely there are very effective twists in the lines."



A potholer's guide to time and space

THE VENUE for so many prosaic scenarios (bodies hurled under trains, bomb-scares, the malodorous intimacies of the rush-hour), the London Underground has also haunted the imagination of poets. Both TS Eliot in *Four Quartets* and Derek Walcott in his stage version of *The Odyssey* have used the Underground as an analogue of the classical Underworld. But then again, you don't need to be a genius to feel that this location offers a pretty graphic sneak preview of hell.

Now, though, if you descend 30 metres below the Strand to the murky, labyrinthine innards of a disused tube station, you will find that the Underground has been commandeered for somewhat less gloomy reflections. A collaboration between

the writer John Berger, and Theatre de Complicite director, Simon McBurney, *The Vertical Line* takes you on an imaginary journey backwards in time, and downwards in space, to the Chauvet cave in France. It was here, in 1995, that paintings of animals were discovered which, dating back 32,000 years, constitute the oldest man-made images yet found.

A spooky combination of intrepid potholing and reverberating meditations on time and art, this powerful experience aims to make us feel the force of the past's immensity. A typical observation is that as we travel backwards, the units for measuring time grow larger and larger just as, in the opposite direction, units of money burgeon through inflation.

The evening begins with saturation bombardments by televisual images and ends in a tunnel of palpably dense darkness where we join in the attempt to recapture what it must have been like to break the vacuum seal on these ur-paintings, momentarily collapsing the concepts of "then" and "now".

In between, chivvied by London Transport safety staff understandably keen that no one breaks their neck, the journey takes in a huge circular shaft where spectral images of Berger lecturing on the astonishingly ageless Egyptian funerary portraits

of Fayum are projected on the bleak wall. It also includes a sequence where you lie on a line of mattresses on a defunct platform, like figures in a Henry Moore evocation of the Blitz, and look up at lonely clouds which are shifting across the barrel-vaulting while Berger apes the tones of a foreign correspondent, offers a front-line report on Corsica 3,000BC.

Alongside the attempt to deepen our sense of historical duration and of the continuity between the unimaginably distant past and the present tense of this event, the main philosophical point would seem to be that it is naive to call the art of the cave painters "primitive". "The need to make images did not precede the talent for doing so," declares Berger. Al-

lied to this assertion is the more obscure notion that what gives the Fayum portraits and the animal paintings their special time-transcending power is that the normal direction of looking was reversed. It was the artists who submitted to being looked at by their subjects and so, by some hazy peculiar logic, the pictures are like self-portraits. An idea perhaps not so much half-baked as over-baked.

All five remaining shows are, alas, sold out, but the curious can follow the proceedings live on the internet at www.intercity.demon.co.uk. A piquant conjunction of the ancient and modern.

PAUL TAYLOR

A version of this review appeared in later editions of yesterday's paper



Down the tube: *The Vertical Line* Geraint Lewis

Sundance rides into the sunset

"DID YOU go to the festival this year? You should have." This was this week's New York independent filmmakers' mantra. The festival was the Sundance Film Festival, so far from these film-makers' homes in Brooklyn and downtown Manhattan. Ever since *Reservoir Dogs*, Robert Redford's expanding, deal-crazy Utah film market has been under attack for becoming a celluloid bazaar. Redford's dingy cradle of "indie" film is now a Hollywood-on-skis. They call it the Cannes of the West. I've always stayed at home, though, and I imagine that Sundance is like Prague now.

This year, Redford turned permissive parent, both blaming the media for the festival's corrosion and saying he would tolerate the event as long as it was good for the film-makers. The hot film was *Happy, Texas* (1999's titles alone are clichés of American independent film: *Twin Falls, Idaho*,

- My Own Private Twin Peaks – and *Happy, Texas* – Paris, Texas meets *Happiness*). A major New York critic tells me that *Happy, Texas* is "sucky", but the film still reaped \$2.5m from Miramax.

Nonetheless, this week critics and distributors and producers defended the fest. They've reconciled themselves to the fact that independent films are just commercial films with denser scripts and characters. They've put to rest that nagging sense of betrayal when so many of these films turn out to be flops.

These festival-goers tell me that we should appreciate this event for its new directors, that we have Sundance to thank for finding *Tarantino*, and *Boogie Nights*' Paul Thomas Anderson and *Slacker*'s Richard Linklater.

But was it Sundance's boozy bonhomie and the seductions of the

new Stephen Dorff, Steve Zahn, such justified; the only problem was how to make the charges stick. "We had to put together the machinery by which Charles could be tried," he declared at one point during the discussion. By "we", of course, he meant Cromwell and the Republicans, but it was an interesting slip. Shame he had to miss the trial really. He'd probably have enjoyed being there.

Instead he contented himself by writing Justice or Murder: *The Death of Charles I* (Radio 4, Saturday), a 90-minute drama documentary in which some of the great events of those times were reconstructed. We heard the radical Colonel Rainbow (Brian Glover) haranguing the army leaders in the Putney Debates, and the high, whining tones of Dr Hugh Peters (Anton Lesser) as he encouraged the regicides from his

pulpit. In January 1649 the king sat at his trial in Westminster Hall as Judge Bradshaw, Solicitor Cook and Cromwell himself began proceedings against him. There were some fine moments as Charles (John Rouse) refused to recognise the court and reminded

them with quiet certainty that: "I am your King."

This was the main flaw in the prosecution's case. Yet there's something else that people tend to forget about Charles Stuart. He may have been a tyrant, traitor, murderer and public enemy (the charge that finally did for him), but he was without a doubt much more interesting than most other monarchs, and for that deserves at least a nod of recognition. By all accounts his personal conduct on the scaffold was exemplary.

Drowned out by the beating of army drummers, he tried to make a final address to those near him, but few heard. Then, after asking if the block could be higher (it couldn't), he went to meet his maker. Even when heard on the radio, the blow of the axe was not for the squeamish.

Until only last week the penalty for treason remained death. As Marcel Berlins pointed out during *Law in Action* (Sunday, Radio 4), there still exists a set of gallows still in full working order, but when Jack Straw signed the Sixth Protocol of the European Human Rights Convention the death penalty was at last abolished.

Unfortunately things were different in the 17th century. After the fall of the republic, Charles II was restored to the throne and reprisals soon began. Solicitor Cook saw himself as a "good Commonwealth man" but this didn't save him from being hanged, drawn and quartered. Neither was Hugh Peters spared.

"His execution was very popular," remarked a contemporary. "It delighted the crowds."

NEW YORK DIARY



ALISSA QUART

THE WEEK IN RADIO



MAGNUS MILLS

WIN FOUR NIGHTS IN NEW YORK

UK Arena, BBC/Flextech's cable and digital channel, is the UK's premier arts entertainment channel. Tonight (Sat 6 Feb), it is showing a night dedicated to stories from the Big Apple.

Called *New York Night*, the night kicks off at 6pm with a look at the life and work of one of the greatest composers of the 20th Century - LEONARD BERNSTEIN. Next up - take a look at the brilliant and eccentric world of the CHELSEA HOTEL in this classic documentary at 7pm. Footage from late 70's New York music scene follows with *DANCING IN THE STREET* at 8pm, whilst you can glimpse the vibrancy of New York life in a series of short films at 9pm - *NYC POSTCARDS*. The highly acclaimed film *STONEWALL* follows at 10pm and the night wraps up at 12pm with a story of the glamour and excess of the New York club scene - *PARTY MONSTER*.

To celebrate the presentation of *New York Night*, we are offering a lucky reader and a friend the opportunity to win a four night holiday in New York at the four star Franklin Hotel on East 87th Street. Return flights are with British Airways departing from Heathrow on Thursday 18 March returning on Monday 22 March. All you have to do is dial the number below, answer the following question on the line and leave your name, address and a daytime telephone number.

Q: Which famous statue is located in New York?

CALL: 0906 470 0930

UK ARENA

Calls cost 60p per minute and should last no longer than two minutes. Winners will be picked at random after the lines close at midnight on 12 February 1999. The prize is subject to availability and must be taken on the dates offered. The prize is not transferable and no cash alternative can be offered. Winners will be responsible for their own transport, travel, insurance and expenses. Normal independent rates apply. The Editor's decision is final.

THE BOOKS INTERVIEW

The liberation of Lolita

Emily Prager proves that the best, and deadliest, things come in small packages. By John Walsh

Tough her new novel and her collected journalism are published on Monday, Emily Prager's launch party was held last week at the Random House offices in Vauxhall Bridge Road, near Victoria Station in central London. This unpromising location turns out to hold tender memories: "I lived in this road when I was 19," she says, "with my English boyfriend and his room-mate, who were both Old Etonians. They used to go shooting and there'd be these dead pheasants hanging on every doorknob."

Emily Prager was 19 at the time, in 1968, and in the throes of sexual liberation at college. Some way after the feminist meltdown of the Millett-Green-Stevens years, she made a considerable stir in 1984 with her first collection of stories, *A Visit From the Footbinder*. It announced a talent for black humour elegantly combined with gender malevolence. "The Lincoln-Pruitt Anti-Rape Device" watched the progress of the all-female, shaven-headed Foxy Fire platoon as they are dropped over Vietnam dressed as nuns and fitted internally with a penis-shredding implement; the title story was a brilliant study in subtle horror, as a Chinese girl called Pleasure Mouse waits for the arrival of the man who will crush her feet into tiny cones to accommodate the tastes of rich Chinese men.

Prager spent three years of her childhood in Taiwan, living with her Air Force father after her parents' divorce, and there's an Oriental precision about her work. She deals in clever miniatures. Her prose is clipped. Her descriptions of people come encased in pithy details ("I met Bob Guccione once and I've been to the Hefner mansion. What intrigued me was the amount of Tudor furnishing they had – the Tudor aspect of rich men").

Her happiest medium is the 800-word essay. Some of her clever three-page pieces about daily life in Manhattan for the *New York Observer* she describes as "little novels". And she is a decidedly *mignon* figure herself, sitting in a leather chair at the Gore Hotel, Kensington, a slight, feline, pale-blue-eyed doll in spotty tights, with a very determined chin.

"In a way China is my motherland," she says. "The people really cared for me when I was separated from my mother. It was beautiful, although I lived in a street with open sewers and at the end of it were little children in terrible poverty and distress. But I understood the place. When I went back in 1979, I knew what everyone was talking about, without understanding the language. It's no accident that my child is Chinese." Lulu Prager is also a miniature, a late arrival in the author's life, now four and a half and at school in Chinatown.

Chinese designs, children, toys and a tiny gun feature in her new work, *Roger Fishbite* (Chatto & Windus, £10), which tells a Lolita-like tale of child abuse and abduction, but from a positive, wised-up 12-year-old's point of view. In this recasting of Nabokov's study of forbidden lust, Lucky Lady Linderhof is no amoral nymphet, but a serious and thoughtful kid, quick to spot signs of dodgy adult libido; she swings between love and need for her fishy stepmother as they take to the road, and winds up demonstrating against sex tourism outside the Japanese Embassy and looking for revenge with a pearl-handled shooter.

Prager bristles at my suggestion that the first half of her book amounts to 100 pages



EMILY PRAGER, A BIOGRAPHY

Emily Prager was born in 1949 and brought up in Texas, the Far East and New York's Greenwich Village. Her columns have appeared, since 1974, in *National Lampoon*.

Penthouse, the *New York Observer* and the *New York Times*. Her first collection of short stories, *A Visit from the Footbinder*, was published to critical acclaim in 1984, and was

followed by *Eve's Tattoo* and *Clea and Zeus Divorce*. She currently writes humour and TV criticism for the *Village Voice* and lives in New York with her daughter, Lulu.

of foreplay. "I was trying to show that children are sexy in a way, that they are sexual beings – it only took my daughter one watching of the Spice Girls before she was saying, 'Would you do my hair like this?', and 'Can I have my skirt tighter?'; and undulating around the apartment. But it's an adult's responsibility not to act on it. There was no attempt to titillate. And I had no interest in comparing myself to Nabokov. I'm

interested in what Lolita has become – the idea of *The Child That Seduces*. Lolita was 12. Even if a child has hormones running through its body, even if it's coming on gangbusters to someone, my contention is that they don't know what they're doing."

Running through the novel are three strands of real-life moral contention. Lucky is fascinated by moral talk shows (the kind fronted by Ricki Lake and Jerry Springer;

featuring sex-change revelations, two-timing boyfriends and near-mandatory fistfights between participants) and dreams of starring on one herself. "They started as freak shows," says Prager, "then they got kinda interesting with Oprah, and now they're vile, dark, murderous, horrible exhibitionism. I don't know where they get the people on these shows." She is, she says, surrounded by stories of child abuse and

it frightens her for her child. Did she blame the climate of baby beauty contests and pubescent popstars? "I don't think you can," she said. "It goes right back to Lewis Carroll, even though he's been exonerated now – though not for me. Most Americans are terrified of strangers grabbing their children in the street one day. But the majority of child kidnappers are by parents in custody battles."

Lucky and the rest of America, she has watched the investigation of the murder of JonBenet Ramsey, the tiny beauty queen. In a nice moment of throwaway sophistication, Lucky reflects that none of the girls in her class thought JonBenet's father could have killed her – being familiar with the habits of billionaire stepfathers, they assumed he would have been too busy to be available for murder.

All Emily Prager's responses to questions about her book are practical, non-literary ones, grounded in the real world. Though a stylish writer, she's more interested in ideas and paradoxes than the pleasure of the text. The 700-odd pages of journalism, collected under the title *In the Missionary Position* (Vintage £8.99), display her talent for conceptual fireworks: they're pungent little satires on masculinity, tough love ("How to Tell If Your Girlfriend Is Dying During Rough Sex"), gung-ho politics, national paranoia, social fads like the Safe-Man plastic doll ("tricks people into thinking you have the protection of a male guardian") – and President Clinton, about whom she is rather sweetly protective.

"It's interesting: he's done all these things that should turn you against him, yet somehow... American women like this guy because they know he likes women. They know because he doesn't choose only beautiful women to go after. Looks aren't the only thing he's thinking about." But didn't that just mean he was sexually indiscriminate?

"I don't think women think of it that way. Clinton didn't behave like a Southern gentleman, but he was no Gary Hart. He did have a real crush on Monica. He'd call her 11 times a day and leave messages on her voicemail. I mean, how naive can you be? But these are little details women pick up."

She is very funny about the idiocy of the male libido – the way, for instance, she noticed men talking directly to her breasts when pregnancy made her bosom larger – and her early days acting in an American soap opera called *On the Edge of Night* in which, "I was always being kidnapped – usually by the same actor."

A very charming and self-assured social commentator is Ms Prager. It's only well into the interview that you discover two key things about her: One, that her mother died only last week and that, for all their long separation, she turns up in all Emily Prager's books. Two, that everything she writes is autobiographical – that Lucky, the abducted 12-year-old, is a junior version of herself, and the dreamy, alcoholic mother is a portrait from life.

Her mother was, it seems, sent on the stage aged eight to support her family after her father died, an appropriation of childhood that Prager talks about with a snarl. Suddenly, her mother and Lucky, and JonBenet Ramsey and Lulu Prager, all seemed to become her children, wrapped together in her wary maternal embrace, warding off the marauders, the paedophiles, the TV freaks, the chilly world of abused kids. In fiction or outside it, Emily Prager has found her métier at last.

SLIGHT EMBARRASSMENT at this week's WH Smith soiree to celebrate the shortlist for their 41st Literary Award. With Beryl Bainbridge confined with pleurisy, Alan Bennett poorly, and Julian Barnes and Will Boyd AWOL, it was left to Antony Beevor and Hilary Spurling to carry the flag. Sadly, neither Beevor's *Stalingrad* nor Spurling's *The Unknown Matisse* is available to shoppers at WHS, except for those lucky enough to be able to visit its Sloane Square branch. No one even seemed sure whether the shortlisting would change the situation. Meanwhile, Hatchards alone has sold over 1,000 copies of *Stalingrad* while Beevor's tiny local bookshop, Nomad of Fulham, has sold 100. Small wonder that many people don't consider WHS a bookshop, although chairman Jeremy Hardie this week said he wanted the chain to be seen as "a seller of serious books". But not a serious seller of books.

THE BRITISH Book Awards produced some popular winners on Thursday. Inevitably, Ted Hughes's *Birthday Letters* was named Book of the Year. Author of the Year was a recovered Beryl Bainbridge, who received a standing ovation for a speech she said was "written for last year's Booker". JK Rowling and Raymond Briggs also had their moments of triumph. There were puzzling moments, however: Ned Sherrin, introducing Sir Tim Rice, called him "the greatest lyricist of his generation". *Discuss*.

SEVERAL PUBLISHING folk have written memoirs but, while posterity is assured by the one copy in the British Library, they do not even reach bestseller lists in remainder bookshops. Now, the National Life Story Collection at the BL's National Sound Archive has embarked on a major oral history project, Book Trade Live. They must pick folk with lively minds and long memories so that what emerges is a red-blooded account of fear and loathing in Bloomsbury, detailing who fired, and who slept with, whom.

THE CITY OF LONDON is keen to dispel the notion that the closest its workers come to reading anything creative is a set of accounts. Businesses, including accountants KPMG, have joined forces with the Poetry Society to launch Poet in the City. The scheme, part of the National Year of Reading, aims to raise the interest rate in poetry and develop links between business and schools. John Mole, the first official poet of the City, takes up his post later this month; he will run workshops and "drop-in sessions" in schools and offices.

THE LITERATOR

The missionary imposition

At the end of a novel about misguided charity, the finger-wagging starts. Enjoy the story, advises Carol Birch, and skip the lessons



The Poisonwood Bible
by Barbara Kingsolver
Faber & Faber, £10.99, 546pp

We came from Bethlehem, Georgia bearing Betty Crocker cake mixes into the jungle. "So begins *The Poisonwood Bible*, Barbara Kingsolver's brilliant, fully realised epic of one family's mid-journey to the heart of darkness. The year is 1959. Nathan Price, Southern Baptist preacher, takes his wife and four daughters to the village of Kilanga on a mission to convert the Congolese to Christianity. A compelling catastrophe of mutual misunderstanding unfolds. Nathan, "Our Father," is obsessed with baptising all the children of the village in the river, which, to the Kilangans, of course, means death. He plants tomatoes and Kentucky Wonder beans, but they cannot be pollinated by exotic African bugs. "Jesus is bongola!" he cries at the end of sermons. Bongola ("most precious") spoken with the wrong intonation becomes "poisonwood," the name of a tree that confers a deadly itch. The preacher's descent into fanatical madness is narrated in turn by each of his four daughters: five-year-old Ruth May Leah, who loves her father and loves the Kilangans, five-talking Rachel, who misses her deodorant and hairspray, and lame, speechless Adah, who discovers that "here, bodily damage is more or less con-

sidered to be a by-product of living, not a disgrace". Kingsolver gives each her own voice. These are rounded, convincing portraits; we become totally involved with them and their untenable plight, as their father's unsuccessful mission journeys from bad to worse and the family falls foul of almost the entire village, including the Cimet and, fatally, the *nganga* or the words of the preacher, "what we call a witch doctor".

Against the explosive background of Congolese independence from Belgium, the election and assassination of Patrice Lumumba and coming to power of the dictator Mobutu, the family struggles against worms in the flour, poisonous snakes, killer ants, illness, starvation and hostile neighbours. News seeps in of the murder of missionaries and violence between blacks and whites. Time to give up, urges the girls' mother. Never, say their father: Jesus will take care of his own.

We are now about three-quarters of the way through the book. If only Kingsolver could have left it here, trusting her readers to draw their own conclusions. Instead, in a lengthy coda, she over-eggs a near-perfect pudding by indulging in great swathes of polemic and filling her characters' mouths with outraged moralising. The points she makes, about the horrors of colonialism and the obscenity of racism, have been made far more effectively by the substance of what went before. Worse, she undermines them by falling into a kind of guilt-induced reverse racism which is obsessed with skin colour. Thus, Leah hopes to "work my skin to darkness," and notes hopefully that "time

A double helping of hype

Could this be the first book to tell a love story from both points of view in turn? Er... Sean French seems to recall that it was done in 1748

YOU CAN win awards for the

best novel of the year, best first novel, even best second novel, but if there were an award for the Deal of the Year, then *Come Together* would win it hands down. Josie Lloyd and Emlyn Rees, authors of one previous novel each, had the sparkly notion of writing a novel together but separately. It would be a love story in alternating chapters with Lloyd telling it from the girl's point of view and Rees from the boy's.

This is far from being "the first novel to tell both sides of the story" as the blurb puts it. Samuel Richardson's masterpiece, *Clarissa*, made devastating use of the technique in the middle of the 18th century, in the form of letters that Clarissa and the rake Lovelace write to confidants.

Richardson is a great storyteller but she is no philosopher and has a shaky grip on moral relativism. "Everything you're sure is right can be wrong in another place," we are assured, yet she believes passionately in the absolute wrongness of Western imperialism. Leah wants to make "something right in at least one tiny corner of the vast house of wrongs" to give her father "the simple human relief of knowing you've done wrong". This is confused and contradictory. Read the book for the sheer power of the story. Skip the lectures.

Rossiter is Nick Hornby *Being Badly with a touch of early Martin Amis*. The first sex scene between Jack and Amy could politely be described as a detailed homage to the first sex scene between Charles and Rachel in Amis's *The Rachel Papers*.

The story is just Mills and Boon with grunge veneer: Jack and Amy meet, have sex, gradually fall in love, though Jack has difficulty in expressing this because he's a bloke and scared of commitment. But just at the moment when he's acknowledging his feelings, enters Bad Girl, who provokes Jack into a very peculiar act of forced infidelity. He confesses and Amy are heartbroken with him. Both are heartbroken and the question in the final chapters is whether love can find a way.

The reason I am reviewing this book is that I have written collaborative novels myself, with my wife Nicci Gerrard, under the inspired pen-name of Nicci French. Obviously, we write completely different kinds of books. Nicci and I are trying for a single, seamless narrative, and we're happiest when we hear from readers who didn't even know that Nicci French is a non-existent schizophrenic hermaphrodite.

The point of *Come Together* is for the narrative voices to

clash and contradict. Readers should not expect any tricky narrative games: this isn't *Roshomon*. Jack tells a certain part of the story, then Amy takes it over for a while, then Jack continues.

The fairly amusing transition happens right in the middle of the first sex scene, but for the most part it is remarkable how little the authors exploit the comic possibilities of the form. "He can't read his," the blurb promises. You expect misinterpretations, partial deceptions, but the comedy largely consists of one character not knowing something about the other, then knowing it.

This is not a book that does anything more than tell you things about men and women you've read elsewhere. It flattens its main characters and reassures its readers, but there's a cheerfulness even about its third-handedness. *Come Together* reads as if it were a laugh to write, but that's not necessarily a compliment.

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Life member of the gaucho club

Borges bewitched the world with his fables, but readers – and translators – should remember his roots, argues Jason Wilson

To celebrate the centenary of Jorge Luis Borges (who was born in Buenos Aires on the 24 August 1899), the Borges estate and Viking Penguin have commissioned this new translation of his "fictions" from Andrew Hurley. To have all Borges's stories and parables in one hefty volume can only be a good thing, but why re-translate them?

These quirky intellectual teases caught on, remarkably in the 1960s, first in the US and then Britain, in the wake of an earlier French discovery. They formed part of the commercial blossoming of Latin American fiction: the heyday of Che Guevara and the Cuban revolution. Borges was then misread as a magical realist; as unlikely as the cover, based on a painting called "Havana", which adorns the clever anthology called *Labyrinths* that Penguin launched in 1970. It was unlikely because Borges was always conservative, and silly in his political views.

In subtle ways, *Labyrinths* created a false Borges by stripping him of his Buenos Aires roots. His first published books were poems celebrating his return to his native city after seven years in Europe, along with an idiosyncratic biography of a minor suburban poet. Borges was so fascinated by the paradoxes of Buenos Aires cosmopolitanism that he wrote essays in a fashioned creole Spanish, and loved imitating the ways street-toughs talked. But the writer who wrote mind-twisting story-essays blurring genres, mocking realism and psychology – and who appeared so curiously modern that he was bracketed with Samuel Beckett when both won the Dix Formentor in 1961 – became the author the world now knows as Borges.

Mainly for political and class reasons, this Borges has had few detractors abroad (Vladimir Nabokov excepted), and many at home in Buenos Aires. His fictional world still strikes me as narrow and limited, with few moving human relationships, no sex, little about women and weak plots. This is a world as odd, and as bookish, as the man himself.

In the 1970s, readers had to turn to several further translations to reach the whole writer, especially those by Anthony Kerrigan and Norman Thomas di Giovanni. Here, for the first time in English, is all of Borges the story-writer. Will he catch on



Collected Fictions
by Jorge Luis Borges,
translated by Andrew Hurley
Allen Lane/Penguin Press, £20, 565pp

again, as he did in 1970, and is the new translation justified by the poverty of the previous ones?

First, the Borges who emerges in this volume struck me as more varied than I expected, with work spanning the years from 1935 to 1983. But, for an author who famously derided length as padding ("the madness of composing vast books – setting out in 500 pages an idea that can be perfectly related orally in five minutes"), there is something worrying about this brick of a book. Could it fuel a mistaken belief that this complete Borges is the same Borges who stunned so many readers and writers? (His roll-call of admirers runs from Michel Foucault to George Steiner, Salman Rushdie and Carlos Fuentes, though few followed his conviction.)

In fact, the Borges who counts is the author of two slim volumes: *Fictions* (1944) and *The Aleph* (1949). This decade of creativity, for a lazy writer who preferred reading, started when Borges wanted to prove to himself that his mind still worked after an accident. It changed our awareness of literature: within Latin American writing, there is a clear pre- and post-Borges style of self-awareness and irony.

But this short outburst was not maintained. Even Borges himself became annoyed by the fame of these despairing and vivid parables. In 1974, he closed his complete works in Spanish with a mock obituary that omitted these two volumes; he often quipped that he was first a reader, then a poet, and only lastly a story-teller.

So this new book blends in several further Borges to the essential writer of the

1940s. There is the Borges who loved parody, and who defined his *A Universal History of Infamy* (1935) as "the irresponsible sport of a silly sort of man who could not bring himself to write short stories". This vein continued with his mock detective works, written in collaboration with his friend Adolfo Bioy Casares.

Then there is the Borges who had turned blind by the 1950s and was coaxed back into writing by his translator and editor Norman Thomas di Giovanni, a process that led to *Brodie's Report* (1970), published an amazing 21 years after *The Aleph*, and *The Book of Sand* (1983). These stories have little bite: the rigour of thought is lost and the syntax loose, simply because Borges was blind and could not think and correct himself as he wrote. Had Borges only written these later stories he would not have become "Borges".

Then there are the sincere poet and the witty, anachronistic essayist. Such a confusion of different Borgeses is noted by the master himself in his self-mocking parable about fame called "Borges and I". It concludes, slightly awkwardly in Hurley's version, "I am not sure which of us it is that's writing this page". (Compare Di Giovanni's "Which of us is writing this page I don't know".)

Why re-translate all these uneven Borgeses and not edit the best into a revamped *Labyrinths*? Here, there's a behind-the-scenes clash between translator's rights and literary estates, and a mistaken, even mercenary, attempt to bring out the "real" Borges by suppressing previous translations.

I have carefully checked Andrew Hurley's new versions with earlier ones and with Borges's own Argentine Spanish. Look, for example, at Borges's own favourite, fantasy-autobiographical story "The South", about an accident a fever and a doomed, imagined duel with a pampas gaúcho. Hurley, who lives in Puerto Rico, misrepresents the basic country word *casco* as "shell of a large country house" (as did Anthony Kerrigan, a previous translator). It simply means the main house and outbuildings of country estates (*estancias*). Another common word, *hacienda*, meaning cattle, becomes "pastures". Kerrigan had "ranches", which it can mean, but not in Argentina.

In the end, a pattern emerges of mis- translations of words with specific Argentine associations. Some of the translator's useful notes are also imprecise.

Another trait is to fill out or explain. For instance, an "old" house in the Spanish becomes a "ramshackle" old house. Yet Borges was tough on himself about such padding.

All this might simply be the kind of erudition that Borges mocked. It is not intended to be a slur on Hurley, who often reads well in English. But it touches on what is unique about Borges: that unex-



In 1955, the ghost of Evita rules the Buenos Aires of dictator Juan Péron, whom Borges always detested AP

pected oscillation between local and universal knowledge. Through a plethora of biographies, Borges is being read today in the Hispanic world as a very *porteño* (someone living in the port of Buenos Aires) writer – one soaked in Argentine culture but open, crankily, to the outer world, at least in a literary way.

An opportunity has been missed to include the best translations of the best Borges – the alert, quirky writer of his midlife crisis in the 1940s – in a volume that would ensure that he remained canonical. Jason Wilson teaches in the Spanish Department at University College, London

He may do, of course, but not in this format, which cannot be smuggled into a pocket and which contradicts what Hurley succinctly calls Borges's "laconic terseness". A last, pedantic note: the first translation of Borges into English was not, as Hurley affirms, in 1948. In 1942, Robert Fitzgerald translated poems in a *New Directions* anthology; and in 1945, Paul Bowles also presciently translated Borges.

Jason Wilson teaches in the Spanish Department at University College, London

Hard lines from the bitter bard

SOMETIME VERY soon, Tony Blair will cast a busy eye over the names just proposed to him as candidates for Poet Laureate: Carol Ann Duffy, Tony Harrison, Seamus Heaney and Andrew Motion. This odd

rigrimole, whereby the PM chooses from a preselected shortlist, exactly mirrors the appointment of bishops in the Church of England. Yet the most purely episcopal figure in British poetry hardly made the initial gossip, let alone the final cut.

Geoffrey Hill's new book-length, 150-section poem, *The Triumph of Love* (Penguin, £9.99), caps a career that began in 1959, when this police constable's son from deep in the Archers country of Worcestershire published his first collection, *For the Unfallen*. Hill's academic career has since taken him from Leeds via Cambridge to Boston, but those Middle-English benchmarks do point to his work's foundations. Ted Hughes aside, no poet since the Eliot of *Four Quartets* has dug deeper into a mystical ideal of Englishness revealed in religion, literature and landscape. And no poet since the Pound of the *Contos* has plowed more savagely the

brutish modern life that saps the faith and mind of "a nation/with no memory/but many memorials but no memory". Its title taken from Petrarch, *The Triumph of Love* mingles an appeal to the Blessed Virgin on behalf of our bloodstained century with much vituperative satire and an elegy for the ineffable losses of the Holocaust and the Flanders trenches. Sometimes, the tone lightens into flashes of childhood memoir, with scabrously funny bursts of self-analysis. The poet portrays himself as a "raucous, narcissistic old sod" – half Jeremiah, half Alf Garnett. His imagination a "kermeesse of wrath and resentment", he upsets a forgetful present with guilty memories.

Knotted, dense, but harshly comic, Hill makes no concessions to dumbed-down modernity ("these strange children/pitiless in their ignorance and contempt") with the vast range of his allusions. In this company, "Benn" will signify the German poet Gottfried, not Tony. Throughout, however, a bemused editor-figure ("ED") stands in for the sceptical reader and even glosses a few of the more abstruse

A WEEK IN BOOKS



BOYD TONKIN
The Bishop of Poetry
delivers a great sermon

passages. Yet Hill's lines prickle with a salty slang, and he often dives into a much more demotic mode. Even Gracie Fields turns up in one of several Second World War fragments. "She and her armed/aspisista, last off the beaches". His satirical voice is sharp and knowing: it will not take much sleuthing to identify "N. and N.", those "worthless" contemporary poets made "Swedish millionaires" (by the Nobel Prize?). And when Hill snipes at "the legends that now circulate/about Canary Wharf, the

Isle of Dogs" (where I type these lines), we poor hacks can be sure that yes, he does mean us, as we hasten the time's ruin with our "entertainment overkill".

Half-smothered by this acrimony yet sprouting like stray flowers in asphalt, Hill's lyric gift makes itself felt now and again. Then, some heart-stopping cadence distilled from the landscapes of his youth will recall the best of Pound: "The common/elm – ulmus procera – also gone/under with the shires; though deer/are cared for, and the rare white cattle; as/ is memory in this tranche of frozen sunlight."

For Hill, as for all the backward-glancing Modernists who descend from Eliot and Pound, the rot began centuries ago. He notes that "mob" and "fim" came in at the same time: in the late 17th century, Eliot's date for a "dissociation of sensibility" that wrecked the Church – and the verse – of England. Take this sacramental politics seriously (which nobody, that heaven, does), and you might end up advocating an Anglican Taliban with croziers and chasubles – and auto-da-fés on the village green.

Theocracy, Hill knows, is hardly on the cards. He spots every hellish pitfall of such nostalgia – more so than Eliot, who failed to square the Holocaust's reality with his lofty Christian ideal. Hill, in contrast, never takes his grieving eye off that flame. His poetry merely hopes to give "a sad and angry consolation".

"The odds/are against High Prophecy", Hill understands: it beggars all belief to imagine a poet of his finesse and asperity lauding the nuptials of some Windsor princeling. No matter: *The Triumph of Love* counts as one of the finest long works from a postwar poet in England. (Not the finest, perhaps; in my view, Basil Bunting's *Briggflatts* stands alone.) Hill takes us on a death-shadowed walk down "the cinder-path by the old scythe-works", from the Black Country to Buchenwald and beyond. Along the way, glimpses of unearthly beauty mix with ashen mourning, acrid rage and a spatter of sour jokes. Follow him, with a keen ear and an open mind, and "There will be no quarrel between us – all this time / a light rain unceasing, the moist woods/full of wild garlic".

ERRATA

by FELIX BENNETT

MARGARET'S HOW TO COOK THE FOREIGN SECRETARY



CONTAINS A GREAT RECIPE FOR STUFFED ROBIN.

Feasting on stale bread and blown roses

Women want more than this self-regarding froth, says Ann Treneman



What Do Women Want?
by Erica Jong
Bloomsbury, £14.99, 202pp

nism can be so frosty. Here was a blast of fresh air. That was more than 20 years ago, however, and time has been pernicious for Erica Jong. She

seems to have come to believe in herself in a thoroughly unhealthy way. She is the centre of her – and now our – universe. The book begins with a look at the power-struggle between the sexes over the past 25 years. In fact, the essays on Hillary Clinton, Louise Woodward and so on are a toe-dip in this direction. They are patchy. Arguments mutate into observations, and vice versa.

The rest of the book is divided into sections on sex and "bread and roses". This latter contains her recipe for "remaining sane". The ingredients are Italy, poetry and her house.

Here the vertical pronoun and the ego become cloying to the point of stickiness. Take this passage from the "Books and Houses": "Fay Weldon was recently my houseguest for a weekend. Quite early Sunday morning, after a cup of tea, she vanished back to the guest room without saying a word... "Shh," I said to my husband. "Fay must be writing."

"Shh," Fay's friend said to me. "She's writing." I pattered around the kitchen feeling a delicious sense of anticipation. It was almost as good as writing myself.

"Shh," I said to my husband. "Fay must be writing." The result was a torrent of applause, enthusiasm, and unpaid agency". She was bowled over and looked him up when she went to California. His house became a refuge. She was one of many visitors, some more muble than others. "Now and then he coped a feel – though not of my breasts. I was not his physical type at all (he adored Asian women) or maybe he thought of me as too bookish, for he always made a great point of how literacy I was. The essay ends with the message, à la Hallmark: "I hope you get your Nobel Prize in heaven, Henry, sent up on blasts of dynamite."

Egregious. What do women want? Not this.

arts

Are you looking for a spot of culture?

see page 32 of
The Independent Magazine

Two legs good, four wheels bad

COUNTRY MATTERS



DUFF HART-DAVIS

The ground is in a dreadful state, with the winter breaking records for rainfall: springs are bursting out where none have flowed before, topsoil is being eroded by the ton, and mud with the consistency of porridge lies knee-deep in gateways trampled by cattle.

Small wonder, then, that landowners, walkers and riders are at daggers-drawn with the drivers of 4x4 vehicles which churn green lanes, bridleways and footpaths into a morass. One notorious theatre of dispute is the Ridgeway, the ancient track that runs east and west along the summit of the Berkshire Downs: a hiker recently described the stretch above Marlborough as being like the battlefield of the Somme.

The leading force for conservation is Gleam, the Green Lanes Environmental Action Movement, founded in 1995 by David Gardiner, a farmer living near Newbury. Today GLEAM has over 1,000 members, including 65 MPs and 16 MEPs drawn from all parties, and its aim is to protect ancient lanes from damage by recreational vehicles.

In the view of its founder-chairman, the law has become hopelessly inadequate, in that it makes no distinction between motorised and unmotorised vehicles, or between surfaced and unsurfaced roads.

"A 30-ton articulated lorry is the same in law as a pony and trap," he says, "and a green lane byway no different from a six-lane dual carriageway."

The group is seeking to establish legal definitions of "motorised" and "unmotorised", "surfaced" and "unsurfaced"; it also wants a ban on motor vehicles using unsurfaced roads, except for access, unless specially permitted by the responsible highway authority.

Mr Gardiner has been personally vilified in 4x4 magazines, but he is far from alone in trying to keep green lanes intact. Skirmishes between the two sides are going on all over the country, and nowhere more vigorously than in Herefordshire, where the county council is considering nearly 20 applications to have paths and bridleways declared Boats-Byways Open to All Traffic.

According to Dr John Harrison, Chairman of the Battle for Bridleway Group, based near Leominster, the root of the problem lies in the Wildlife and Countryside Act of 1981, which places a county council under an obligation to respond to any application for a right of way. When an application comes in, the council must serve notice on any landowner affected, and investigate whether or not a public right of way has ever existed. If evidence comes to light that the way was once open to vehicles – even if they were only carts – the council must declare a Boat, thus granting access to motors.

The Act expressly denies councils the right to take into consid-



A rambler inspects the damage made by 4x4s and trail bikes at Oareborough Hill, near Chieveley, on the Berkshire Downs

David Gardiner

eration any impact on environment, wildlife, amenity or archaeology; decisions must be based entirely on evidence gleaned from historical records. When a decision is announced, objectors may call for a public inquiry, and they have a month in which to prepare counter-claims; but the inspectors who preside over the inquiry are equally bound by history, and they may not take environmental considerations into account.

This is patently ridiculous, and misses the essential point that vehicular rights were established by horse-drawn carts, hundreds of years before the internal combustion engine was invented.

In Dr Harrison's view: "The trouble is that research in the public records is laborious and technical. The 4x4 clubs are well-funded, and they've retained a lawyer who can devote a major percentage of his time to this work. In effect, they're doing the council's work for them. Most of the objectors are farmers, who have neither the time nor the training to prepare counter-claims."

The landowners fear that north-west Herefordshire will become criss-crossed by a network of Boats, which they claim will destroy the character of the area. In the words of David Keown-Boyd, who lives near Bucknell, over the border in

Shropshire: "If you don't know the area, you cannot envisage the degree of degradation to which this exceptional environment would be subjected."

Yet even he concedes that very few green lanes have been churned

up so far – a point made by one of his most active opponents, Chris Marsden, co-ordinator of the Marches Historic Lane Preservation Group, which is directing the research in county archives.

"His aim," Mr Marsden says, "is

to preserve the character of ancient lanes," which will not survive if they fall out of use because they have been fenced or blocked off. His special interest is in the sunken tracks created by the passage of men, animals and carts over hundreds of years. On such ancient routes, he says, "you're surrounded by history – trees which are very old, hedges which date back a thousand years".

He contends that the damage to such lanes is "fairly light from any sort of vehicles", and that "in most cases there is absolutely none from recreational vehicles". Almost all the damage that does occur, he maintains, is done by farm tractors and trailers, and by the 4x4 trucks of the utility companies and so on.

Indeed, he claims that most lanes would positively benefit from an increase in recreational traffic of between 10- and 50-fold, and should be promoted as a "leisure resource". Such extra use, he believes, would help keep ancient routes clear and maintain their character. He is, of course, "ab-

solutely against any form of trespass", but equally he has no doubt that: "People who want to keep the public away from their little bit of old England – they're the menace."

So the argument festers. Meanwhile, the demand for places in which drivers can exercise their exits is enormous. People are happy to pay £25 per car for a cruise along Forestry Commission roads in the nearby Mortimer Forest, even though they scarcely leave hard surfaces. Most of these, though, are beginners, whose Discoveries and Freelancers rarely go off Tarmac, and who have to consult their manuals before they can engage four-wheel drive. Mudpluggers – the true addicts – pay £100 a day or more for instruction in a really foul environment.

The difficulty is that they actively want what other legitimate users of the countryside most hate – rutted slippery slopes, water, mud up to the axles; and if they find such amenities freely available in the country, they will take to the lanes in hordes.

NATURE NOTES



ONE CURIOUS feature of woods on the Cotswold escarpment is the proliferation of gooseberry bushes, far from

any human habitation. They rarely flower or fruit, because they are usually on sunless sites, beneath the tree canopy; but their sharp spines make them unmistakable, and they are among the earliest shrubs to break into leaf. Their presence is due to badgers and

foxes, both of which are partial to fruit. Having gorged themselves in summer gardens or orchards, the scavengers excrete gooseberry seeds, and so propagate the bushes.

SOME TREES, such as sycamores, make use of the wind to spread their seeds, but other species are inadvertently disseminated by wild creatures. Jays carry acorns away from oaks, and either drop them or hide them and forget them. Squirrels also bear off hazel

nuts and beech mast, some of which, if buried, may shoot into seedlings the following spring. The hard seeds of many berries pass unchanged through the digestive tracts of birds, and the tough seeds of weeds such as fat hen and stinging nettle can survive passage through the gut of horse, cow or sheep. Burrs – the prickly seed-cases of plants such as goosegrass – stick to the coats of animals or the clothes of humans, and achieve dispersal that way.

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A blot that became beautiful

One of England's largest power stations cast a shadow over Miranda Seymour's childhood.

But now its cooling towers and monumental walls have created their own eco-system



Power stations are landmarks of the 20th century

admire the estate, stared resolutely in the opposite direction. A well-meaning few said the towers were rather splendid. The rest pointed to where the snout loomed above the garden and said, with horror in their voices: "And what in God's name is that?"

They weren't asked back. Noise was also to be ignored, even when the thing roared like a beast above the polite clatter of plates around

our breakfast-table. Later, when my father got his sense of humour back, he was able to grin about the time he had called the noise monitor over and told him to bring a tape recorder. The only noise recorded in three excruciatingly long hours was the sound of two swans flapping their wings.

Thirty years on, the station is part of the landscape. The pheasants were the first to

realise they were on to a good thing and to defect, en masse, to roost among the cooling towers. Foxes, patrolling the skyline, glare through the wire mesh fence at a hillside the station side, not ours – as rich in rabbits as Watership Down.

On the river, where thousands of tepid gallons are belched back into the Trent every day, the anglers crow that they've never had it so good, in the warm dark ponds at the base of the cooling towers, gigantic carp breed and circulate in a state of mindless pleasure, safe in the knowledge that the longest rod in the world is never going to reach them through a wall of steaming water.

The bicycle path went; others, in spitting distance of the towers, survived. Walking last week along a towpath to a lock and a pretty hump-backed bridge by a shop where my brother and I used to buy Walls cornets and – it seemed so sophisticated – bottles of dandelion and burdock fizz, I thought I'd walked into the past. Until, that is, the sun went and I looked round to see why.

Lying in the shadow of the towers, 100 yards away, there's a farm and a paddock where Sebastopol geese, chickens, Aylesbury ducklings and a couple of peacocks keep company with two friendly lurchers and a donkey. A few yards further on, one of the prettiest small churches I know keeps quiet guard over its alabaster monuments and effigies. You could be in the 17th century until you walk out of its wooden door, smack up against the station.

I used to hate it. Now, I drag visitors up for a sunset stroll on the hilltop. Look one way and you see green fields, the red-brick chimneys and curving gables of a Jacobean house lying at its ease among oaks and larches and cedars. Look the other; and you see a 30th-century fortress rising from the plain. Its massive walls flushed pink by a hectic sky. If I'd come back from some ancient civilisation, I think this was a temple of the Gods.

LOOK BEFORE YOU WALK

INDEPENDENT ADVICE FOR THE INDEPENDENT TRAVELLER:
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In the first of two articles about Jamaica, James Ferguson discovers that there's more to the island's cuisine than rice 'n' peas

AJamaican publisher friend of mine, Ian, peering approvingly into a large pot of boiled dumplings and yams, says: "This is food." It's not meant as a value judgement - there's no stress on the "this". It's simply a linguistic clarification, because the starchy, stodgy tuberous bits of the Caribbean diet, also sometimes known as "ground provisions", are simply called "food" in Jamaica. These rib-sticking delicacies have many names - pumpkin, yams, eddoes, dasheen - but to the untutored palate they all taste pretty much the same. Rather solid.

That food and starch should be synonymous in this part of the world doesn't come entirely as a surprise. Jamaican cooking is calorific, to say the least, with the emphasis on frying and baking, and favoured ingredients that include coconut milk, butter and condensed milk. A Jamaican Sunday brunch would be considered meagre without boiled green bananas, fried plantains, rice 'n' peas and - when in season - roasted breadfruit. And those are just the side dishes.

It seems that a love of stodge runs deep among the many different peoples who have inhabited this fertile island over the centuries. The indigenous Tainos left a taste for cassava, which remains as an ingredient in the present-day "hammy", a flat, round bread. Their Spanish tormentors introduced not only sugar cane, but bananas and rice too. The British are responsible for dumplings and potatoes, while the Africans who shipped over into slavery introduced such heavyweight delicacies as "festival", a deep-fried cylinder of cornmeal.

But carbohydrate isn't the whole story. Subtle - and less than subtle - herbs and spices are intrinsic to Jamaican cooking and similarly reflect the island's mixed cultural history. Curry came with 19th century indentured Indian labourers, while scorchingly hot chilli probably reflects a Spanish love of *verde caliente*. As in all Caribbean Creole cultures, the result of mixed European, African and Asian influences is an intriguing blend of tastes.

The idea was for Ian and me to drive around the island, sampling some of these tastes in a culinary circuit. He assured me that each of the island's 14 parishes had a particular delicacy and that most of them could be tried at the roadside (the variety and quality of "street foods" are a particular feature of Jamaican



Starchy, stodgy, tuberous vegetables, like the pumpkins and yams sold in Montego Bay, are simply called "food" in Jamaica. David Cummings/Eye Ubiquitous

Yam, bam, thanks mam

eating, he said - turnover is quick and food-poisoning risks minimised). All this, moreover, was to be done in a spirit of research: having already published a Jamaican cooking book, Ian was interested in a parish-by-parish follow-up. This was to be a sort of reccie.

First, Kingston. A large, steamy, traffic-clogged city with some distinctly dodgy areas, and not really on the tourist map. But even so, it has several very good restaurants and a network of fast-food outlets, which sell the ubiquitous and delicious Jamaican snack for about 20 pence a time. While lingering on the streets after dark isn't perhaps a great idea, I felt sufficiently bold to try some drum chicken. This is the

urban version of rural jerk chicken, seasoned and barbecued in an oil drum. Billowing and pungent smoke leads you to these roadside vendors, and a parcel of tender and spicy chicken pieces costs about £1.50.

Setting off early up towards Ocho Rios, we drove over the central mountains. After deep and dark river gorges and mountain-side bends, the road emerges onto a plateau at Moneague, where a row of some 30 shacks awaits the peckish passer-by. They compete fiercely, offering grilled corn on the cob, curry goat, oxtail soup and, of course, jerk chicken. Jerk chicken, is not hard to find. Every village seems to have a "jerk centre", which I found amusing (Ian didn't).

Heading west along the coast road, we gave the all-inclusive resorts and condominiums a wide berth, passing through decaying market towns and half-built tourist strips until reaching Montego Bay (apparently a corruption of the Spanish *manzana*, or lard). The scruffy town centre seems to be in a state of continual gridlock, a situation which may explain the unusual incidence of hooliganism - one eccentric woman insisted on licking our car windows. Our appetites duly dampened, we none the less managed to eat "one pot" bowls of red pea soup - a stew so thick that one pot is all you need. Cursing our overnight stay in the luxury Half Moon Club at MoBay (eating bland, imported gravad lax

and watching the Japanese guests), we continued hungrily along the road. Ian grew more cheerful as we neared his home parish of Hanover. Like all Kingston residents, he waxed lyrical about a fast-disappearing rural Jamaica, and I could see his point as we drove through ramshackle-but-pretty villages, and plantations of coconut palms. The sea is always nearby at this western tip of the island, so it seemed like a good idea to try some fish. Escovitch is the name given to the marinade of vinegar, onions and hot red peppers into which the fried fish is immersed. Well, I think that was the system, even though it seemed the wrong way around.

We carried on south through

Savanna-la-Mar to the atmospheric and rather rundown town of Bluefields. It was time for another meal and I had a thick and delicious fish soup - much better, I thought, than the bony escovitch. We settled for just a few bammies and a bag of ackee to take back to Kingston.

A few hours later in Mandeville, as if by some natural metabolic self-defence mechanism, I had developed raging toothache. Despite that, the trip up to Boston Bay in Portland parish on the north-east tip was deemed compulsory. Two hours and many potholes from Kingston, this is the home of authentic jerk food, the style of cooking that reputedly started with the Tainos. Chicken or pork is marinated in a

mix of spices and then barbecued over pimento wood in a special pit dug in the ground. Alas, in the midst of torrential rain we were the only tourists - or researchers - on the culinary circuit and Ian suddenly announced that the pork was less than fresh. Unfortunate really, since I had already eaten half of mine and spent the rest of the day fearfully awaiting retribution. It never came.

After so much roadside sustenance, I wasn't exactly hungry, but was keen to meet Norma Shirley; the queen of new Jamaican cooking and the inspiration behind Norma at the Wharfhouse, near Montego Bay, and Red Bones in Kingston. These places are chic, expensive (£20-40 a head), and anything but stodgy. At Red Bones, I had chicken breast in fumage frais and champagne sauce on a guava coulis. And no "food".

Norma used to be a nurse in London, married a doctor, and once lived in the posh Dulwich estate where Mrs Thatcher bought a house. She had discovered good food during trips to France, had worked in a Berkshire restaurant and moved to New York before returning to Jamaica. She is now a star, the subject of TV shows and *Taste* features.

Much Jamaican food is unhealthy, she admits, and she caters to a small, discriminating clientele, using olive oil and herbs, but little salt. Her trademark ingredients, it seems, are thyme, scallion and Scotch bonnet red peppers. Wherever possible she says, she uses local ingredients, preferably from the mountainous interior near the town of Christiansburg. Not far from cool, upland Mandeville, this is smallholder country and reputedly the best place for organic vegetables. Norma dismisses the "waxed apple syndrome" of imported American food, the kind of synthetic stuff that she says is dished out in the all-inclusives.

I ventured to ask her what her favourite meal might be. "Oxtail and stew peas," she replied promptly. That might not be "food", but it's still pretty Jamaican.

British Airways and Air Jamaica fly to Kingston and Montego Bay. There are also a great many connecting flights from Miami.

Red Bones in Kingston is at 21 Brumner Avenue (001 876 978 8282); Norma at the Wharfhouse is at Readings, west of Montego Bay (001 876 979 2745). A good book on the island's food is End Donaldson's *'Real Taste of Jamaica'* (Ian Randle, £12.95).

James Ferguson is the author of *'The Traveller's History of the Caribbean'* (Windrush Press, £8.99).

Women are sex tourists too

Is it the romance that women are paying for in Jamaica? Or is it a feeling of power that they can't get at home? By Sue Wheat



Shirley Valentine had to go abroad to be appreciated

THE CARIBBEAN is marketed as Paradise. And for many, an important element of Paradise is being adored. Many single white women visiting Jamaica will discover that there is no shortage of Jamaican men willing to earn money from spending time with female tourists. Some are paid cash, but more often than not their payment is in the form of meals, clothes, or the promise of a visa to the West.

A British sociologist, Jackie Sanchez-Taylor from Leicester University, has found that almost half the women she questioned in Negril, Jamaica, had had one or more sexual relationships with a Jamaican man while on holiday. Their justifications were not unlike those made by their male counterparts - that the people they have sex with are not like "ordinary prostitutes" and are less critical than partners at home.

"Today some female sex tourists are travelling to reaffirm their femininity," Jackie Sanchez-Taylor explains in her book, *Tourism, Travel and Sex: Women who feel rejected by men in the West are 'sweet-talked' and 'loved' by men abroad, and once again find that they exist as sexual objects."* So, as Shirley Valentine

demonstrated, by travelling across the world, it's possible to be fawned over by highly desirable men. But not all women are overcoming insecurities.

Some are just looking for an unpressurised good time, aren't they? In this case, what they get is power - the power to decide how long the relationship lasts, and to have a relationship with the type of person not normally available to them.

"Where at home they might be stigmatised for having relations with black men, younger men, 'womanisers', or for having many sexual partners," says Ms Sanchez-Taylor. "In holiday resorts such as Negril, they are permitted to 'con-

sume' the black male, the younger boy, the playboy or as many men as they desire while maintaining their reputation back home."

So, for once, they can experience feeling more powerful than a man - and particularly a black man, a person who they may stereotypically think of as "hypersexual" or "dangerous" at home.

But control over a sexual relationship is not the main objective for all female tourists. Many prefer to use their power to affirm themselves as kind, caring women. For example, one Canadian interviewee, a divorcee near retirement age, conducted a

long-distance romance for 18 months with a Jamaican "countryman" 20 years her junior, who "lived the simple life of a farmer in the mountains". She sent him money and brought gifts from Canada and taught him to read, write and appreciate classical music.

"She said she didn't want someone who would swamp her with emotional demands.

When she visits, she spends her time buying him shorts and shirts and cooking him big pots of food because when she goes back to Canada "he eats very little," explains Ms Sanchez-Taylor.

So, by being the farmer's "civilising" influence, the woman is using sex tourism to reassess herself.

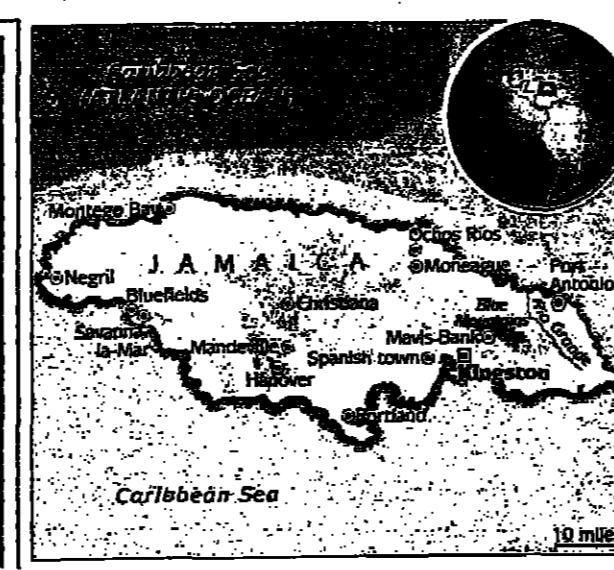
Many tourist women find the idea of caring for and taming a "noble savage" romantic.

"Gigolos" in Negril are quick to tap into this demand and many claim to be "country farmers" who only venture into Negril now and then to sell products they have grown or made. They become mirrors which reflect the female sex tourist's chosen image of femininity.

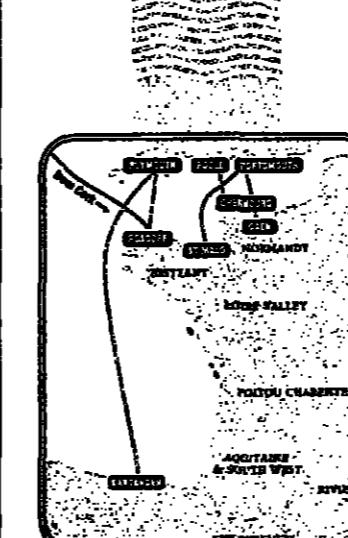
Tourism, Travel and Sex, Eds S Cliff and S Carter, is published by Pinter later this year

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Beware of low flying fruit

At Mardi Gras, the Belgian town of Binche is pelted with oranges by men in padded suits. By Clare Thomson



The Gilles, young men from Binche, dress up like escapees from a Wonderland emergency ward and pound the streets, acting out ancient fertility rites

Charles Lenars

Forget sweaty spectacles in Rio or pancake-tossing rituals in Pangbourne; to the citizens of Binche, Belgium's carnival capital, Mardi Gras is a chance to paint the town red. Blood-red.

And, if you visit the former mining town in the run-up to carnival, you'll see shopkeepers frantically masking their windows with chicken wire. On Mardi Gras afternoon, you'll understand why: hundreds of men in padded suits and fluffy feather head-dresses pelt buildings and bystanders with blood oranges, gleefully smashing unprotected windows.

Around 300,000 fruit are lobbed during a two-hour riot that leaves the town centre moist with pulp and, although revellers may no longer hurl broomheads or flour at people who they think aren't joining in, that proves to be small comfort if you happen to have copped a fruit flush on the temple.

The fun-loving Binchois have performed similar rituals for the best part of a thousand years. In the 16th century, when the town was favoured by a Low Countries governor, Mary of Hungary, revellers across the Habsburg empire boasted that their wildest exploits were *mas bravos que las fiestas de Binche* (the old name for the town). Despite spiralling unemployment, the carnival remains as intact as the 12th-century ramparts that ring its centre, making this Belgium's only walled city.

Festival songs say that, come Carnaval, young men spend their

year's earnings in less than a week; in fact, the event requires year-long sacrifice. What with costume rental, society subscriptions, drink and insurance, the bill can come to over £1,000 per participant.

At the Carnaval's heart are the Gilles, weirdly costumed figures who stomp the streets with hypnotic regularity throughout Mardi Gras, recalling ancient fertility rites to banish evil spirits from the winter soil. With be-clodged feet, straw-stuffed backs and bellies, bandaged heads and suits adorned with lions, crowns and stars, they look like escapees from a kind of Wonderland Accident & Emergency Department. Folklore has it that they were born 450 years ago, when Mary's courtiers dressed as Incas to celebrate the conquest of Peru, but scholars say that the Gilles is an 18th-century street-theatre character, a cousin of

Harlequin who possesses ancient magical powers.

For a Binchois, becoming a Gilles is the highest honour imaginable. Veterans proudly boast that, while other festive traditions have been debased down the years, their carnival remains as authentic as ever. That's partly due to a sense of insularity, of being walled in against the world (locals say that there are only two places in the world—Binche and abroad). It's also down to the fanatical strictness with which customs are maintained.

To become a Gilles, you must be male, of Belgian nationality and born in Binche—or have lived there for five years; once you've attained the hallowed status, you must never wear your costume outside the ramparts of Binche. Woe betide anyone who flouts the rules: if you're seen out of costume, or travelling in a car,

you can be barred from Gillehood for life. Even the elderly or ill must slip into muff before thumbing a lift. There are a few honourable exceptions: in 1943, a group of Gilles in a Nazi prison camp defied their oppressors by parading in Carnaval gear made from paper and tin cans.

Mardi Gras is the culmination of weeks of wild parties and a year of preparation. Madness mounts throughout the New Year, when the Gilles amass in front of the onion-domed town hall for a marathons of Sunday rehearsals, shaking the cobles of the central square to the ceaseless beat of drums.

The locals shuffle behind the Gilles-in-waiting, inching towards the next tavern and another Binchoise beer (if you need to brush up on the shuffle dance, try to get through to the bar). The Binchois tease any visitors in the relevant di-

alct, explaining "we love a good laugh". As Carnaval draws near, it's time for gala balls and the anarchic Night of the Trouilles ("pigs") de Noyelles, when heavily disguised local wits enter bars, cafés and homes, poking fun at customers and demanding a free drink. But the weeks of ribaldry are only a prelude to the chaos that cuts loose over the three "fat days".

The riot begins on Dimanche Gras, when men dress as women, or Mam'zelles, and the Gilles-to-be sport luxurious costumes. Favourites include Madame de Pompadour, England's Elizabeth I and Tintin characters, but there's plenty of room for topical improvisation. Monday is a chance for diehard ravers to get their breath back, a family day when the youth groups of the town's political parties settle their scores in confetti battles.

But Mardi Gras is what they've all been waiting for. Men are reduced to tears when they talk about wearing the Gilles suit, while mothers admit to weeping with pride as their spolios sons leave the house before dawn, to return in a somewhat more spattered state the following morning. Gilles drink only champagne throughout the day, and the bubbly flows from Sam as the Gilles waddle from house to house, collecting their mates and downing a fluteful at every stop. As a symbol of equality, they wear wax masks painted with green spectacles and curling ginger whiskers.

Unless you have friends in Binche, you're unlikely to see this ritual, although in recent years tourists have turned up uninvited at private homes, with nary a bottle of Bolly for their hosts. Better to arrive around 8am as hundreds of Gilles converge on the station, a mock-Gothic vaulted marvel that recalls the town's industrial peak.

The Carnaval kings abandon their masks after lunch, donning the feathers as the orange-throwing begins. At night, the Pierrots, Harlequins and Oriental princes join the Gilles, juicing the ground for hours on end as fireworks detonate around them. Those with staying power stamp 'til dawn, sustained by drink and the never-ending drums.

There's only one hotel in town, so you're better off staying in Brussels or in nearby Mons. Stagger back to the station at dawn as the Gilles retreat in a hungover haze, and ponder next year's bash—and this year's damage.

SIMON CALDER
After many delays, the 'Caledonian 300' resisted air rage and just applauded

IN A week when the phrase "Airtours Twelve" entered the travel vocabulary, Dennis Hill writes from his hotel in Goa to report a less celebrated but more heartening episode involving a group of people I shall dub "the Caledonian 300".

Caledonian Airways flight 26 was due to leave Gatwick for Goa at 4.15pm on Friday last. When Mr Hill arrived from his home at Leigh-on-Sea in Essex, he found the flight delayed because the inbound plane was late.

Once the passengers were

finally on board, a series of events took place which Mr Hill describes entertainingly:

"No sooner were the passengers loaded and welcomed than the captain had the embarrassment of telling us to get off."

Apparently the ground engineers found it necessary to inflate the olio (whatever that is). With a full load of fuel and passengers, the weight was too great for this to be accomplished.

"Boarding for the second time, the captain explained that because we had missed the departure slot, our flight would hang around at the end of the runway to be fitted in between the scheduled flights."

"Eventually clearance was obtained. The TriStar surged down the runway, suddenly to be thrown into a dramatic emergency stop with brakes fully applied and reverse thrust operating. The captain immediately assured us that there was nothing wrong with the aircraft, but that air traffic control had found us too near another plane and had ordered the TriStar to stop."

"Now the captain had to break the news that the emergency stop at 100mph caused overheating of the brakes and it would take 30-45 minutes for them to cool."

"Sometime later the captain announced: 'I really don't know whether to laugh or cry - the fire tender has got stuck in soft ground under the port wing and we now await a breakdown truck to tow it away.' Eventually the tender was removed, and a smooth take-off and normal flight to Goa ensued."

"The recipe for air rage once the drinks trolley had done the rounds? Not a bit of it."

"The behaviour of the passengers was exemplary: no outward display of unease, no jeers or caustic comments. The applause that greeted our airborne state was supportive, not derisive. It made an exciting start to our holiday."

FACT FILE	
The Binche Carnaval begins on 14 February and grinds to a halt at dawn on 17 February. For details of accommodation in Binche or Mons, call Binche tourist office on 00 32 64 336727, or the Francophone part of the Belgian tourist office in London, on 0171 458 2888.	to Binche (or anywhere else in Belgium) via Brussels. Book a week in advance and stay away a Saturday night. For Brussels-Binche connections, call Belgian Railways (0171-593 2332).
By air, the main carrier to Belgium is Sabena (0181-780 1222), which flies to Brussels from Belfast, Birmingham, Bristol, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Leeds-Bradford, Manchester and Newcastle. From Heathrow, Eurostar (0990 186186) offers a 289 return from London	Gatwick and Stansted, Virgin Express (0800 891199) offers one-way tickets from £39. By train, Binche is around one hour from Brussels airport.
	Binche is home to the Carnaval and Mask Museum (10 Rue Saint-Maurice, 0032 64 335741), which has the largest collection of masks in the world; until 18 April, it hosts a show devoted to Swiss revelry that makes the Binchois celebrations look rational.



Journey to the source
A JOURNEY is really complete without a souvenir or two. So, rather than being an afterthought at the duty-free counter, why not make shopping the basis of your itinerary? Some of the world's best travel destinations are also the sources of the world's favourite products, so get out there and get shopping.

THE CARIBBEAN ISLANDS Handbook (Footprint Books, £14.99) describes these mount-

If you're planning a visit to Jamaica (see page 19), it makes sense to explore the area that gives its name to Blue Mountain coffee, first produced in Jamaica in 1757 and now sipped by wealthy caffeine-consumers the world over.

The Caribbean Islands

tains, which rise to a height of 7,400ft at Blue Mountain Peak, as "one of the most spectacular and beautiful parts of Jamaica". The book also gives handy advice for anyone venturing into this coffee-producing area.

Public transport is infre-

quent, so drive up past the Blue Mountain Inn, through Mavis Bank and into Hagle

gaps. From here, the steep but signposted trail to Blue Mountain Peak takes three to four hours up and two to three hours down.

The views are more worthy of the climb later in the day. Along the way, the lower slopes are covered in intensely verdant vegetation, banana plantations and, of course, coffee

groves. Higher up, tree ferns and dwarf forest appear and, if you're lucky, a doctor bird or two. This swallow-tailed hummingbird is Jamaica's national bird and fairly common in the area.

Should all the climbing make you thirsty, you have two options. The first is to stock up locally; you can stop off on your way back at Mavis Bank Central Factory (001 876 977 8528 or e-mail: jablum@wt.jamnet.net). One of the oldest and largest coffee producers on the island, the factory sells the real Blue Mountain stuff for US\$19 per lb (£11). Or you can pick up a reasonably-priced bag in the duty-free shop.

If the island doesn't feature in your immediate travel plans, nip down to the just-opened Jamaica Blue Mountain Coffee Shop, at 18a, Maddox Street, London W1 (0171-408 2272). A pound of Blue Mountain coffee costs £28, but if the British price makes you wince, sit back and soothe your aching wallet with a cup of Blue Mountain Filter Coffee (£1.30) instead. This chic café is open Monday to Friday 7.30am to 7.30pm and on Saturdays 10am to 5pm.

On Thursday evenings, when the place is open until 10pm, you can listen to live Jamaican music and dream of funding your Jamaican jaunt by

buying up enough coffee to cash in on back home. The profit from only 15 bags of Jamaican-bought coffee could buy you the current £249 return charter flight to Montego Bay with Jetline (0171-360 1111).

Gadgets of the week
IF YOU want to arrive at your destination looking fresh-faced and ready to rumble your way through the urban jungle, help is at hand in a little 50ml tube.

One of the main culprits in disembarking from an aeroplane looking puffy-faced and pallid is often not the lack of sleep, free booze or even unscheduled diversions. Pressurised cabin air can be extremely drying - particularly on skin that's already had to deal with the impact of sun, sand and too many happy-hour cocktails.

So, next time you pack your suitcase, forget the bottle of baby oil and stock up instead on SkyHydra, a new moisturiser designed for use on long-haul flights. Available duty-free (£14.95) at many British airports, or by mail order (£18.95 with duty) on 01634 226203, moisturising ingredients include pro-vitamin B5, vitamin E, coconut oil, calendula and aloe vera and it is light enough to use everyday - even if you're not a daily jet-setter.

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St. Catherine's Monastery & Petra

visiting St. Catherine's Monastery and the Rose Red City of Petra

The convenient location of the 4-star Coral Hilton Hotel in Nuweiba makes it possible to combine the fascinating sites of St Catherine's Monastery with the "rose red" city of Petra. The journey is further made possible by the direct flights from London Gatwick to Sharm el-Sheikh and the regular ferry services to Aqaba.

Our journey commences with a four-night stay at the Coral Hilton Resort at Nuweiba. This will be our base both for relaxation on the Red Sea coast to enjoy the winter sunshine and our visits to St Catherine's Monastery and the Coloured Canyon. On Day 5 transfer by hydrofoil to Aqaba and travel north by road to Petra and the Petra Forum hotel for the next three nights.

During the stay at Petra we will visit various areas of the site (entrance fee not included) and make optional visits to Little Petra and Wadi Rum, the location of David Lean's film "Lawrence of Arabia". On Day 6 drive to Aqaba for the regular passenger service to Sharm el-Sheikh and the return flight to London Gatwick.

THE PETRA FORUM HOTEL

This 4-star hotel is situated close to Petra. The 149 rooms each has private facilities, air-conditioning, TV and minibar. Other facilities include two restaurants, lounge, terrace/pool bar, swimming pool and shops.

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A high point of the Alps

A favourite with the élite, Garmisch-Partenkirchen is still to be discovered by the masses. By Stephen Wood

It was the Nazis who made Garmisch-Partenkirchen a big name in the skiing world. There had been skiing and ski-jumping in the area around the Zugspitze, Germany's highest mountain, since the beginning of the century; but it was the decision to hold the 1936 Winter Olympics there that made the resort's name - Hitler ordered that the neighbouring Bavarian villages of Garmisch and Partenkirchen should be joined together, with a hyphen, to organise the games - and led to the creation of many of its winter-sports facilities.

The U-shaped arena at the bottom of the ski-jumps survives in its original form, the grandstands not quite tall enough to be truly triumphant but none the less heroic in their fascist detailing. The huge ice rink remains, too, although it has been extensively remodelled. Garmisch-Partenkirchen's skiing reputation lives on thanks to its annual staging of a blue-riband event in the World Cup racing series. And the resort has become a member of the elite Best of the Alps association, grouping it with such posh places as Cortina, Davos and St Moritz.

Yet Garmisch-Partenkirchen - to save ink, let's call it GP - has not caught on with British skiers. Whereas in other established European resorts one would expect to see Britons first or second in the list of visitor nationalities, in GP we fall far behind the top two, the USA and, astonishingly, Japan. As far as I am aware, the only British tour operator offering ski packages there, in a couple of pages of its standard brochure, is the Leicester-based German specialist, Moswin Tours.

With the advent of Go's £20 Standard-Munich return flights, however, it's easy and cheap enough to go skiing in GP without the help of a tour operator. Regular trains from the airport go into Munich's main station, from which there is an hourly service to GP (the journey takes about 30 minutes). And right alongside GP's main station is the terminus of the Zugspitzbahn, a mountain railway



running almost to the peak. The weekend before last, I set off for a couple of days' skiing there.

The P part of the resort, Partenkirchen, lay on the old coaching route south from Munich across the Alps to Austria and Italy. On the eastern side of the valley through which it passed is a mountain - and small ski area - called Wank (which doesn't amuse the Germans, but gave me some solitary pleasure); to the south-west is the range which climbs towards the 2,962m Zugspitze, whose vast east-facing snow slope dominates the skyline, and up to the 2,964m Zugspitze peak.

Having arrived late on Friday, I spent Saturday on the larger of GP's two separate main ski areas, which runs off the side of the Alpstein. Served by three cable-cars, all close to stations on the Zugspitzbahn, it is dominated by red runs, either wide and easy pitched below the lifts or pistes which sweep down through the forest. The best of the descents, however, is a black, the Kandahar piste used for the annual World Cup downhill race.

Although the descents - especially the Kandahar - were great fun, it was the wrong weekend to ski the wider pitches, what with a "children ski free" promotion and the German pharmacists' annual skiing championship. Dodging chemists and kids, I headed up to the top of the ski area to find a far more entertaining hazard: dogs. An avalanche rescue team was introducing its trainees

sifters-and-diggers to drag-lift techniques. The advanced dogs endured their obvious embarrassment at being wrapped around the handlers' shoulders; the beginners suffered the greater shame of being carried in a bright-pink contraption somewhere between a waistcoat and a handbag.

I talked to one of the handlers after he had been knocked off the lift by a squirming young pup. The drag-lift training was, he said, "very difficult". For him or the dogs? "Both," he replied, in a tired voice.

For Sunday's skiing, I took the early train to the Zugspitze. (I did ask about the coincidence - Zugspitze translates as "Train Peak" - and was told that it was no more than that.) The train rattles along the valley at a good speed; but to get a grip on the steep part it engages a cog wheel with a sort of metal ladder set between the rails, and grinds its way slowly up the 1,400m ascent. The whole laborious commuter trip - of 17km - took 80 minutes, almost as long as the Stansted-Munich flight.

The ski area on the Zugspitzbahn offers superb views. But it is small: even a langlauf skier would cover it in the time taken for a return journey on the Zugspitzbahn. And the skiing is all easy red runs and well-used off-piste slopes - with one notable exception. Although I do not suffer from vertigo, I had some of the symptoms on the area's one rickety chairlift, hanging off a rockface with Austria just across the border, spread out below; and I felt the others when it dropped me at the end of a ridge, with steep descents on three sides.

The skier offers superb views. But it is small: even a langlauf skier would cover it in the time taken for a return journey on the Zugspitzbahn. And the skiing is all easy red runs and well-used off-piste slopes - with one notable exception. Although I do not suffer from vertigo, I had some of the symptoms on the area's one rickety chairlift, hanging off a rockface with Austria just across the border, spread out below; and I felt the others when it dropped me at the end of a ridge, with steep descents on three sides. The black run off the ridge is also heart-in-mouth stuff at the top; but after a steep and narrow runway, it turns into a wide mogul pitch which is amusing rather than threatening.

There are other compensations for the long train journey. A swift cable-car (crowded, on my trip, with sightseers from Japan, for whom the Zugspitzbahn station signs appear thoughtfully in Japanese script) takes you up to the Zugspitz peak, whose block-house tourist centre's attractions include a panoramic viewing gallery, an excellent restaur-



IV. OLYMPISCHE WINTERSPIELE
GARMISCH-PARTENKIRCHEN

Lithograph poster from 1936 advertising the Olympics

Christie's, South Kensington

rant and, curiously, an art gallery. It's hard to imagine what could compete with the view from the windows; certainly, the four blue Perspex blocks installed by Ron Horn couldn't. Still, it was an experience: I have never clumped around an art gallery in ski boots before.

An art form indigenous to GP of frescos painted on building facades, was far more diverting. I spent most of my non-skiing time wandering around the resort admiring biblical scenes and architectural flourishes (fake windows with wistful women looking out are popular).

Even modern suburban homes have the odd knight on horseback brightening up side walls, and I spotted one house on which a superb trompe-l'oeil facade showed workmen finishing off its construction, with a madonna and child on top of the scaffolding apparently supervising the plasterers and hod-carriers.

That alone was worth the trip. I understand now, however, why ski-tour operators don't offer GP in their brochures: with such a limited ski area, it wouldn't provide a week's entertainment - except for those who share my enthusiasm

for *lifdmalerei* (literally, "outside painting"). But for a weekend's skiing, it's perfect.

Stephen Wood paid £80 for a flight to Munich with Go (0845 60 54221). The train to the resort costs DM72 (26). A one-day ski-pass for all Garmisch-Partenkirchen areas except the Zugspitze costs DM82 (£29), for the Zugspitze DM62 (£22, including train ticket). For Moswin Tours, call 0116-271 9922. A sole of vintage ski posters, such as the one pictured here, takes place at Christie's (0171-581 7611) on 25 Feb

SOMETHING TO DECLARE

NEWS FROM THE TRAVEL WORLD

True or false?
Norfolk, Virginia, has two international airports True. As with many American cities, the home of the US Navy enjoys the choice of two airports: Norfolk International, a six-mile drive north-east from the city centre (for which the airport shuttle bus will charge \$13), and Patrick Kelly International, 12 miles north. The former is usually used for diversions of international flights.

Other cities where you may be surprised to find not one but two airports include Houston (Intercontinental and Hobby), Dallas (DFW and Love Field) and Chicago (O'Hare and Midway). Your problems get worse if you are trying to find the right airport in New York (three) and Los Angeles (six).

One thing that all these airports have in common is that, in accordance with Federal Aviation Administration rules, boarding an aircraft while under the influence of alcohol is not permitted.

Bargain of the week
Montego Bay, Jamaica Airtours (0176 223324) is selling a last-minute deal departing from Gatwick at 9.25am tomorrow. Seven nights at the fully inclusive Sunset beach resort costs £748. The charter flight is due to arrive in Montego Bay at 2.50pm, according to the normal flight plan.

Trouble spot: Jamaica Latest Foreign Office advice Most visitors enjoy trouble-free holidays at resorts. Vigilance is still advisable outside the safety of your hotel. Be alert for bag-snatchers and pickpockets. Do not carry valuables, large amounts of cash or travel documents unnecessarily. Visitors are advised against walking at night or using public transport. Exercise caution when walking in isolated areas even in daylight hours. Do not offer resistance in the event of an attempted robbery.

One woman and her dogs

Christine Campbell travelled across the frozen Canadian wilderness by the same means as the first pioneers - with snow-shoes, skis and a team of badly behaved huskies

"WHOA, KAWNIS! Whoa, Pacquin!" Our instructor had said: "Control of the dogs is by voice." My team of four Siberian huskies, however, hurtled along a path of their own, oblivious to every command. We were at the end of a 15km dog-sledding trek, and our guide Chris, in the sled directly ahead of mine, was taking the shortest route diagonally across an open clearing back to the kennels. My dogs were having none of it. With one mind they

swerved left, and joyfully proceeded to run the full sweep of the clearing - followed by all the other teams.

The "Footsteps of the Pioneers" trip was designed to give a taste of the Canadian winter outdoors, and this was a moment of full-velocity pleasure at the end of a three-day excursion into the Algonquin wilderness.

Five of us had left a very wet Toronto two days previously for the four-hour drive north. The plan was to follow in the snowy

footsteps of northern native peoples, using techniques adopted by early European settlers. In the warmth of the van, Angie, our driver, described the activities planned for each day: snow-shoeing, cross-country skiing, and dog-sledding.

We turned off the main road for the last 10km of our journey, driving over snow and ice-covered dirt-tracks to the cabin which would be our base. This was sufficiently off the beaten track to be without electricity,

so there was no hot water; all lighting was by kerosene and paraffin lamps, and water was pumped up from the lake through holes in the ice. But wood-burning stoves and the kitchen range made it ideal for defrosting after a day's activities Angie and her partner in cold, Scott, had in store for us.

The first day we snow-shoed. Made of ash and often laced with moose hide, the shoes allow you to walk on soft snow without sinking; it took a few minutes of awkward shuffling and tripping over to get used to them, but we soon established a rhythm and headed into the woods north of the lodge. A swathe of boreal forest traverses Ontario and is home to an abundance of animals.

At first, our laughter must have warned the wildlife off, but soon we were silenced by the stillness and beauty of the forest, and snow-slept quietly through the fresh snow - thigh-deep in places - for several miles. Approaching a beaver dam in the evening darkness, we heard the splash of a beaver by the riverbank, and found a six-foot pine tree lying across the path: it had obviously just been gnawed down and was being dragged to the dam. When we skied past the next morning the job had been completed.

The third day's dog-sledding was the highlight of the trip. Leaving early, we drove to Raven's Watch, a 70-dog kennel. The noise was deafening. The dogs were already in teams of four, harnessed in ganglines, and desperate to run. These were Siberian huskies, graceful and intelligent dogs with

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SCOTLAND

Glenco 0% Snow drifting

St. Moritz 100% Gd skiing/riding

UNITED STATES

Squaw Valley 50% Fresh powder

Information supplied by Ski Hotline

Resort Area open Comment Slopes (cm) Lwr Upr Last snow Temp Forecast

ANDORRA Arinsal 100% Upper runs best 100 130 28.1 -8C Unsettled

AUSTRIA Schladming 99% Packed powder 50 100 29.1 -2C Chngable

Hochgurgl 100% Packed powder 45 235 4.2 -2C Unsettled

CANADA Jasper 99% Packed powder 90 95 1.2 -20C Brt spells

FRANCE Chamonix 95% Powdery surface 100 220 5.2 -15C Variable

Deux Alpes 90% Gd at all levels 90 240 29.1 -3C Bright

ITALY Cesana 70% Better cover 40 70 30.1 -3C Chngable

Voss 90% Good conditions 50 110 24.1 -2C Cloudy

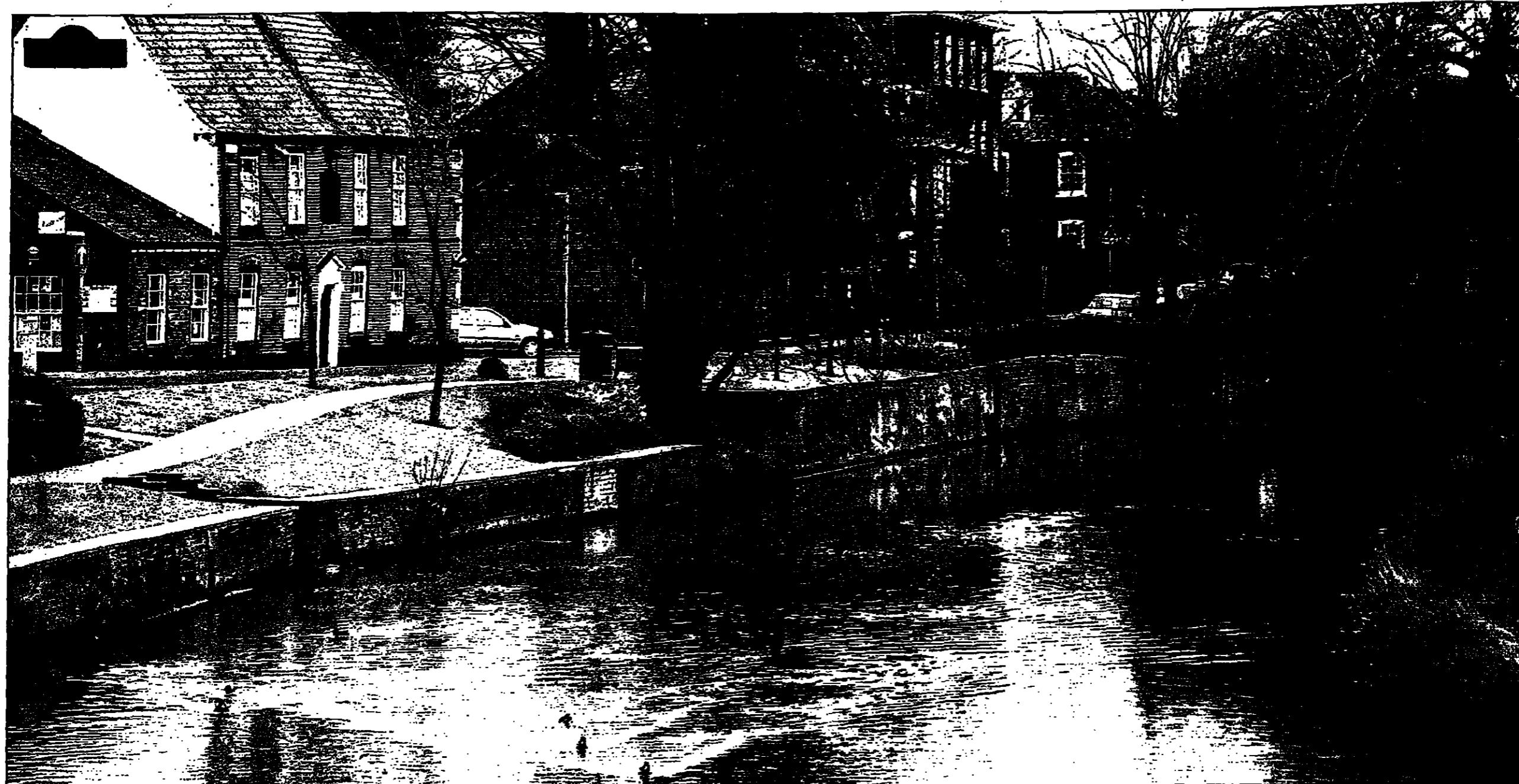
SWITZERLAND Glencoe 0% Snow drifting

St. Moritz 100% Gd skiing/riding

United States

Snow Valley 50% Fresh powder 110 310 1.2 -1C Cloudy

Information supplied by Ski Hotline



A river runs through it: Spalding in Lincolnshire is worth visiting not only for the splendid Springfields flower show, but also for the almost Dutch charm of the town itself

Geoffrey Roy

Tiptoe through the tulips

You don't have to go to Holland to get a taste of spring - in Spalding there are multi-coloured flowers galore. By Geoffrey Roy

We may be in the throes of winter but, for flower fans, there is a chance to sample a taste of spring - and you don't need to travel as far as the Netherlands to catch it. As a matter of fact, you need travel no further afield than the Lincolnshire Fens to find Britain's very own Spring Garden of Europe. This weekend, Spalding hosts the Springfields '99 flower show, where thousands of daffodils, hyacinths, tulips and numerous other flowering bulbs and scrubs will provide an extravaganza of colour under one roof.

Although Spalding and the surrounding area is known as "South

Holland", the "Holland" part of the name does not allude to the tulips that were once abundant here but, rather, is a reference to the Anglo-Saxon word for high ground. Despite this confusion, Spalding itself has a very Dutch feel. The town lies astride the River Welland, which sweeps through the town in a deep tidal channel and gives this sleepy little place much of its character.

Armed with a copy of the Tourist Board's Spalding Town Walk Guide (20p), I set off to explore. From earliest times, the River Welland brought trade to the area; corn and potatoes flowing out, timber and coal flowing in. Snuggled within the precincts of the town, the banks of the river are lined with dignified

Georgian houses, old warehouses and mills, and modern structures that are in keeping with the town's ambience and make a walk along the river's edge a pleasure. Numerous Victorian footbridges span the river along the way, making access to both sides easy.

As land was gradually reclaimed from the marshes in this area,

thanks would often be given by building a church. These religious buildings would then become the focus of surrounding farms, often developing into the centrepiece of a growing town. This is obviously the case in Spalding and the parish church of St Mary and St Nicolas, medieval in origin but with a distinctly Norman feel to it. Sadly, modern progress has added to the

town's architecture in the shape of a modern supermarket building at Spalding's heart.

One of the largest attractions in

the area, however, is the bulb fields and people have been travelling to Spalding since before the Second World War on organised tours to revel in the beauty of Lincolnshire's bulb fields. Over the last hundred years, since flowers began to be grown commercially, Lincolnshire's bulb fields have grown substantially from a smallholding of 500 acres in 1900, selling exclusively to London's Covent Garden, to more than 10,000 acres producing 25,000 boxes of daffodils a day and selling throughout the world.

"Tulipmania" raged in the

Netherlands from 1634 to 1637, when

an Admiral van Enkhuisen bulb, one of the rarest and most beautiful tulips, could fetch 5,400 guilders - about 15 years' wages for the average Dutch worker of the time - but tulips didn't arrive in Lincolnshire until 1907 when Frederick Culpin brought in 100 bulbs of six different varieties and established the British tulip fields. When tulips were at the peak of their popularity, there were about 3,000 acres growing but today the tulip fields have diminished to little more than 300 acres.

The first flower-hunting excursions here began as long ago as 1835,

when the area had over 300 visitors

arriving from London by train and bus to witness the coming of spring.

By 1949, more than 100,000 people

were coming in more than 100

coaches and 6,700 cars to explore the area. Special daily sightseeing routes were established to enable the visitors to see the best of the day's blooming flowers.

The bulb season in the Fens begins with the Springfields show and ends with the Spalding Flower Parade and Spring Festival in the first week of May. The Springfields flower show started up in 1966 with the purpose of the study and proper cultivation of flowers grown from bulbs and corms. For the last 23 years, there have also been displays, and the appeal of the Springfields displays stems undoubtedly from the chance they offer to flush away the winter blues with a passage into spring through the bulb fields of Lincolnshire.

Springfields '99, a 12,000sqft display of landscaped beds of tulips, daffodils, hyacinths, flowering scrubs and miscellaneous bulbs, takes place this weekend from 11am to 5pm. Admission costs £1.50 for adults and is free for under-16s. There is wheelchair access and there will be restaurants and bars open all weekend.

From about 4pm on Sunday, all

the flowers on display are sold off.

To get there, take the A1 to Peterborough, then follow the A1139 to Eye Green where you should follow the A1073 through Cottenham and Cottenham to Spalding. Directions to the Springfields Exhibition Hall will be signposted. For information call 01775 713253 or consult the website: www.d-i.co.uk.

FLOWER FESTIVALS OF BRITAIN

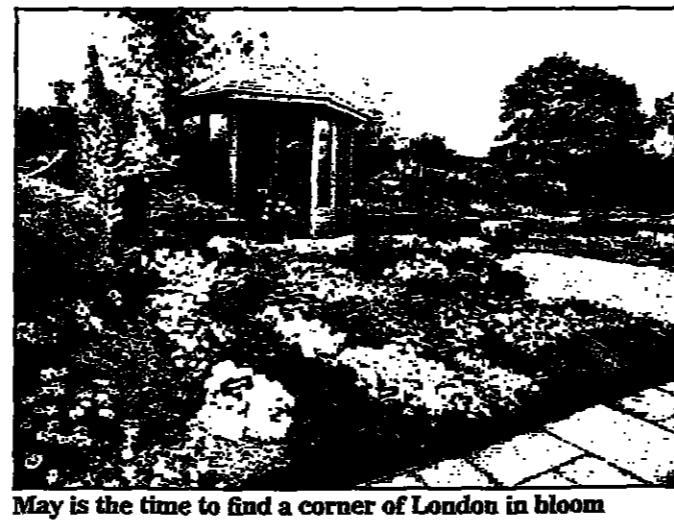
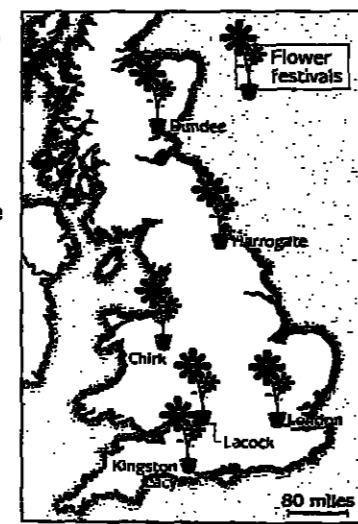
Lacock Abbey
This 13th-century abbey, near to Chippenham, nestles in the midst of Wiltshire's chalky hills. Lacock itself is an attractively traditional village that has timber-and-plaster houses and grid-mapped streets included in its territory, and the abbey is the place to head for if you're in search of snowdrops.

This is the perfect time of year to visit the surrounding Victorian woods as snowdrops cover the ground - a welcome reminder that spring is on the way - and other flowers bloom throughout the cloistered gardens. Over the next few months you may catch sight of Crocus vernus, aconites, fritillaries and, later, daffodils.

On 13 and 14 and 20 and 21 February, from noon until 5pm, the gardens and woods will be opening specially to raise money for the National Gardens Scheme. Admission: £1.80 for adults, free for children. For further details call 01249 730459.

Harrogate Spring Flower Show
This Victorian spa town is sombre yet elegant, with dark stone buildings, a large, grassy parkland known as the "Stray" and numerous cosy tea rooms. These features make the town an ideal location for the spring flower show, which boasts the largest daffodil display in the north of England. The show also includes an early tulip display, numerous other flower arrangements, and stalls from more than 90 nurseries.

The event takes place at the Great Yorkshire Show Ground from 22 to 25 April. Admission: £8-£10, with a £2 reduction for those who book before 16 April. Opening times are 9.30am to 5.30pm, except for 25 April when doors will be closing at 4.30pm. For further information call 01433 561049.



May is the time to find a corner of London in bloom

London Orchid Show

Unlikely though it may seem for dedicated flower fans, it's worth wading your way through the noisy streets, the petrol-pumped air and the battles of finding your way around London. In addition to the Chelsea Flower Show in May, this year the capital is to host an elite orchid event in March.

Both traditional orchids and hybrid varieties will be on show in the exotic displays, and many of the plants - which originate from locations all over the world - will be available to buy at the show.

The London Orchid Show takes place at the Royal Horticultural Society, New Hall, London SW1 on 20 and 21 March from 10am to 5pm. Entrance: £5 on Saturday, £3 on Sunday. RHS members get in for free. For tickets call 0171-316 4707.

Dundee Spring Show
As in London, the hustle and bustle of Dundee needs only to be peeled back a little to reveal a second - and rather more flowery - skin. This year sees Dundee launch its ninth flower show, with a focus on spring

blooms, but visitors will have to wait until April to enjoy the displays. Expect to see a tremendous array of April flowers, including daffodils, tulips and various cut "Spring Collections".

The Dundee Spring Show takes place at Old Glamis Road, Dundee on 3 and 4 April. It will be open from 10.30am to 5.30pm on Saturday and 11am to 5pm on Sunday. Admission: £1.50 for adults and £1 for concessions. For further information, call 01382 434500.

Chirk Castle
This great, gaunt castle stands austere on the outskirts of Chirk, a former principal

staging-post on the route to Ireland, situated between the industrial town of Wrexham and the Iron Age hill fort of Old Oswestry. Every spring the grounds play host to a proliferation of daffodils, which lead the visitor all the way up to an 18th-century statue of Hercules.

There will be special openings of the grounds to enjoy the spring flowers, on 13 and 14 and 20 and 21 March. Opening hours will be from noon to 4pm with the last admissions at 3.30pm. Entrance: £1.50 for adults and 75p for children on these dates, or £2.60 and £1.30 respectively afterwards. Chirk Castle is situated outside Wrexham in North Wales. For further details call 01691 777701.

Kingston Lacy
Situated near Wimborne

Minster, a civilised coastal town in Dorset that is home to narrow streets, Georgian houses and an imposing Norman church, this grand National Trust property is a springtime mecca for snowdrop-lovers.

Admiring the Lady Walk blanketed by delicate snowdrops has become something of a tradition for such people, and special weekend openings have been organised for the purpose - but you'll have to hurry. The final snowdrop weekend ends tomorrow so, for final glimpses, pay a visit between 11am and 4pm on 6 or 7 February.

Entrance: £2.50 for adults, £1.25 for children, and free for members. For more information call 01202 880413.

BEATRICE HODGKIN

Go Dutch in Europe's finest kitchen garden

Keukenhof in Holland is the world's largest bulb-flower garden and a paean to the bloom that drives men mad. By Geoffrey Roy

THINK OF tulips and you think of the Netherlands. When the Dutch think of tulips (bearing in mind that they have some 15,000 sq km of bulb fields netting about 1.330 million pounds worth of export trade), they think of Keukenhof near Lisse, about 45km south-west of Amsterdam.

This year is the 50th anniversary of the founding of Keukenhof, which literally means "kitchen garden". A group of prominent bulb growers established the site in 1949 to convert ordinary Dutch people to the joys of growing flowers from bulbs in their own gardens. Keukenhof is situated on an estate that once belonged to a 15th-century countess who used to grow herbs and vegetables for her dining table here - hence the name - and it is now deemed to be the world's largest bulb-flower garden. With 80 acres of tulips (some 6 million), daffodils, hyacinths, and other flowering bulbs, flowering scrubs, ancient trees and beautiful ponds and fountains, Keukenhof is referred to as the Spring Garden of Europe.

Strolling around the landscaped gardens is an absolute delight, even for those not interested in gardening and horticulture. Flower-beds glimmer with the sheer abundance of colour as each variety of tulip presents its spring-time blush and, nestled amongst the more common ones, are many of the rarest species.

Tulips originated in Asia in a belt that extends eastward from Ankara in Turkey, through Yerevan and Baku to Turkmenistan, along the Silk Route to Bukhara, Samarkand and Tashkent, and on to the Pamir-Alai and Tien Shan Mountains in China's

central-Asian province of Xinjiang. There are now about 120 naturally growing species spread throughout the Old World.

Ancient trade routes caused the tulip to spread its flowers westward, but tulips didn't arrive in Europe until bulbs were brought from Constantinople to Antwerp in 1562. Today, there are more than 5,500 different tulips listed in the *Classified List and International Register of Tulip Names* published by the Royal General Bulbgrowers Association of the Netherlands.

As part of this year's show at Keukenhof, there will be 10 changing indoor flower exhibitions or parades; seven themed gardens; a corn mill; and, for children, a special "Bollebozen" or "Whiz-kids" route through the gardens, a maze, animal pasture and play area. There will also be a music garden where you can enjoy smaller bulbflowers and trees to the sound of music.

If you're planning a visit, the 10 temporary flower exhibitions, or so-

called parades, are: amaryllis, freesias and hyacinths from 26 March to 6 April; orchids from 26 March to 7 April; tulips and irises from 8 to 20 April; chrysanthemums from 29 April to 13 May; narcissi (daffodils) from 22 to 28 April; roses from 9 to 15 April; special bulbous plants from 30 April to 10 May; *Astroemeria Bowditch* from 17 to 27 April; lilies from 14 to 24 May; and carnations and summer-flowering plants from 15 to 24 May.

The Keukenhof Gardens are at *Sationsweg 166a*, Lisse, and are open daily from 25 March to 19 May from 8am to 7.30pm. Try to arrive early to beat the tour buses.

Admission is £18 for adults and £9 for four to 12 year-olds. There are three restaurants on site and cash machines available. Wheelchairs and push-chairs are available free of charge. For further information, call 01 31 252 465 555 or email info@keukenhof.nl. There is also a website at www.keukenhof.nl.



Spring-time blush of the Dutch national flower

Geoffrey Roy



48 hours ... in San Francisco

You need a break – and a shortcut to the soul of a city. Ten years ago *The Independent* launched 48 hours, the prescription for the perfect weekend break. The idea has been often imitated but never equalled. This week Stuart Price is in San Francisco

Why Areas So
Small I hesitate to preach
about because I'm
an evangelist. For Price, he's

Why go now?
Because air fares are at silly prices (barely more than £200 through discount agencies), the weather is better than the UK (and always will be) and because it's stunningly beautiful. Another appealing factor is the price. It's a reassuringly economical city, certainly cheaper now than in Gold Rush times, when the easy wealth of the city saw eggs selling for up to \$50 a dozen and whiskey for \$30 a quart.

Get your bearings
Maps of this neat and compact city (which divides conveniently into a number of different neighbourhoods) are available everywhere in San Francisco. Also pick up a Bay City guide, which is free in the newspaper bins on most street corners.

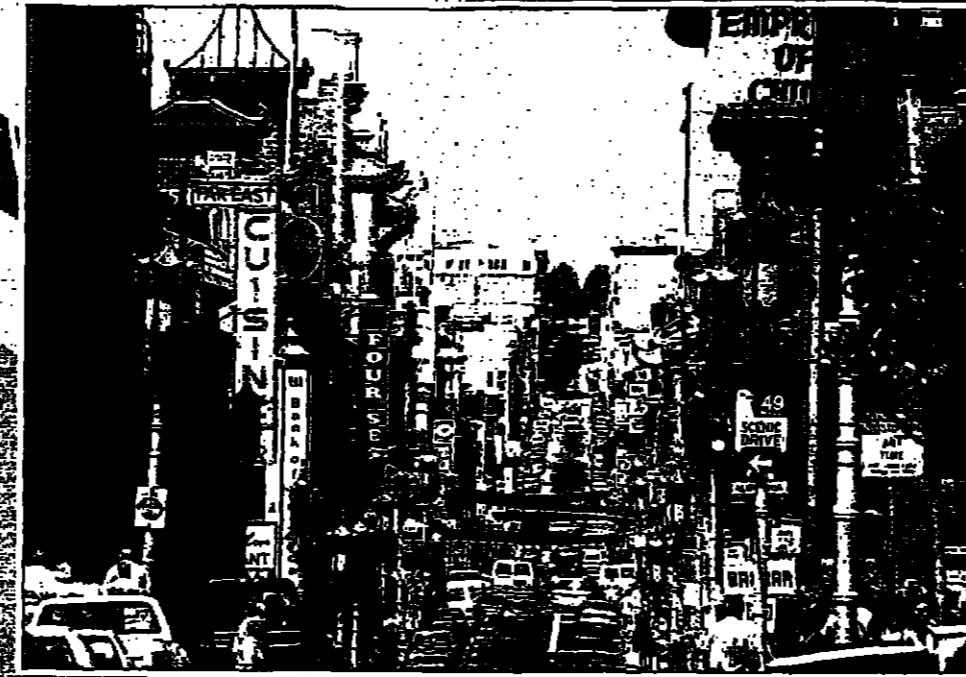
Beam down
A cab ride from the airport to downtown San Francisco is around £18, a door-to-door hotel shuttle service costs around £6 and a stretch limo will cost anything up to £60.

Check in
The tourist hotels are centred downtown around Union Square, scene of the film *The Conversation*. At upwards of £90 a night, there is the St Francis (011 415 397 7000), where Sara Jane Moore attempted to assassinate President Ford in 1975. There are also plenty of middle-budget hotels for £55–£75, including the Commodore (011 825 Sutter, 001 407 740 6442) and the Beresford (011 635 Sutter, 001 415 673 9900). For more economical accommodation, the Geary (011 Geary, 001 415 673 9221) is clean and friendly with rooms for around £25 a night.

Watch out for...
Earthquakes. San Francisco is due for another shake some time in the next 30 years. For smokers there are more immediate problems: the city has a zero-tolerance smoking ban everywhere, and many hotels no longer provide smoking guest rooms. Some bars do ignore the ban but restaurants uphold it. And, finally, you may want to give Tenderloin a miss. Not in the carnivorous sense but in the urban – this is the name for half a dozen blocks slap in the city centre known for their uninviting shabbiness, litter-strewn streets, flophouses, and the lively local trade in drugs and prostitution.



Graphic: Kristina Perris



Lunch on the run
San Franciscans spend more per capita eating out than any other city residents in the US. The fact that the food is generally good quality, even at 99¢ burger joints like Jack in the Box (404 Geary Street, 001 415 673 0868), probably explains why. For lunch, try one of almost 20 bagel types and a fizzing mocha at the Sonoma Valley Bagel Company (Sutter and Grant, 001 415 951 0133).

A walk in the park
For many, Haight-Ashbury (011) is still a centre for love and peace – the Jefferson Airplane, The Grateful Dead, and Janis Joplin houses are all within easy walking distance. The local houses, shops and cafés wear this heritage proudly – Victorian-style clapboard houses in streaks of purple, orange, pink and blue, are decorated with tie-dyed curtains and psychedelic artwork – and the area has managed to maintain the village feel it had when the hippies moved in, with anarchist bookshops, vintage clothing emporiums, "record" shops, body art, and chimes. Designer label stores still sit comfortably beside discount depots. Haight Street finishes at Golden Gate Park (011) the largest expanse of green in San Francisco.



Golden Gate Bridge with San Francisco in background

GLOBAL AGENDA

New York
Christie's first skiing poster sale last February proved so successful – with most of the early-20th-century posters attaining prices far higher than their estimates – that the second sale (25 February) is making the headlines. Whether this reflects a rampant nostalgia for stylish holiday resorts or a growing appreciation of classic graphic design (see picture) is anyone's guess, but many buyers may well be paying a visit to Cooper-Hewitt's "Graphic Design in the Mechanical Age", a selection of more than 200 posters, paintings, drawings, collages and ephemera from the 1920s and 1930s. Works by Jan Tschichold, Alexander Rodchenko and the Stenberg brothers, among others, will be on view, and preliminary designs will be shown alongside finished pieces. Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, 2 East 91st Street, New York, New York, USA (01 212 849 8400) 9 February–23 May, £3–55



attracts hundreds of troupes of musicians and dancers to entertain locals and tourists alike. Following the election of the Carnival Queen on 10 February, there will be parades, dancing, live bands – and, on 17 February, something called "the burial of the sardine"...

Various locations, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Spain (00 34 922 24 0500), to 21 February, free

San Francisco
The 85 paintings, drawings, photographs and sculptures brought together in the exhibition "Mirror Images: Women, Surrealism and Self-Representation" are the work of women associated with or influenced by the surrealist movement. The pieces, dating from 1928 to 1986, are by such artists as Louise Bourgeois, Frida Kahlo, Cindy Sherman and Meret Oppenheim, and reflect their authors' rejection of the passive role of object in the "Santa Cruz de Tenerife Carnival", which

(male) gaze which has been propagated traditionally throughout art history. The self-representation here is a celebration of the reappropriation and recreation of the depiction of the feminine self. Its spirit resonates through contemporary art today. Museum of Modern Art, 151 Third Street, San Francisco, California, USA (00 1 415 357 4000) to 20 April, £4–£6

Sydney
Since its foundation in 1978 as part of a commemoration of the Stonewall Riots in New York, the "Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras" has grown to become one of the largest gay and lesbian arts festivals in the world, with over 80 community, cultural and political events to keep fun at a premium. To qualify for a ticket to the extravagant last-night party, you need to become an international member of the Mardi Gras, but anyone can hit the streets on Saturday 27 February to enjoy the outrageous costumes of the night-time Parade.

Various locations, Sydney, Australia (00 61 2 9557 4332 or <http://www.mardigras.com.au/>) for membership and ticket details to 27 February. Party tickets cost AU\$70

SHARON GETHINGS

THE FRENCH are the lucky ones. When they disembark from the Eurostar from Paris and cross Waterloo Bridge, they get the finest prospect of London's latest five-star hotel – whose name is its address. One Aldwych occupies a funny wedge on the edge of Aldwych, the semi-circle that separates Covent Garden from Fleet Street. The premises are suitably grand for an Edwardian hotel – but in fact the building, Iverson House, was designed as a home for the *Morning Post*, a now-defunct national newspaper. The swimming pool in the basement of the hotel was where the presses were located, and it is flanked by massive steel supports.

From the street, passers-by gawp in at the hotel through the huge windows into the former Advertisers Hall. It is now a lobby bar where high-profile guests like Mick Hucknall, Robbie Williams and Roger Moore may sit in high-backed chairs. "A hotel that refreshes the mind" was the driving concept for the One Aldwych's creator and managing director, Gordon Campbell Grey.

I'm not saying that the place is modern, but I couldn't decide if the object to the left of the reception desk was (a) sculpture or (b) a hi-tech lateral radiator or (c) a bench. No one yelled when I sat on it to survey the clean lines, clear spaces and elaborate staircase, so I assume it was the latter.

ARE YOU LYING COMFORTABLY?
Beds: minimum of 6ft wide, with four plump pillows and an eight-inch mattress designed by Hypnos: "The first thing that we sell is a good night's sleep," says Campbell Grey. Non-smoking rooms are available. The best among the 105 rooms is a two-bedroom

24-HOUR ROOM SERVICE: ONE ALDWYCH

Bracing brunch
For those who can stomach it, you can eat breakfast or lunch 24 hours a day around Union Square. Diners such as Loni's (Fifties influenced, but solid food, 001 415 392 8646) and the Pine Crest Diner (011 Mason and Geary (a bit greasy, but well-patronised by locals, 001 415 885 6407) serve pretty much anything at anytime.



The only way is up: the stairway to One Aldwych's Axis restaurant and bar
range of whooshing and clunking hydraulic noises that sounds like the soundtrack from *Creature from the Black Lagoon*.

KEEPING IN TOUCH
Television: the five terrestrial channels plus CNN, MTV, Sky and others
Radio: yes, along with a classy CD player
Fax: a machine will be brought to your room on demand
Internet: bring your own laptop, and plug it into the ISDN socket if required
Phone: a three-minute local call costs 75p
Switchboard: the average time that the phone rang on three occasions was 10 seconds. Hold music – "Steve McQueen" CD by Prefab Sprout.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION
One Aldwych, London WC2B 4BZ (0171-300 0500); sales@onealdwych.co.uk
Transport: a bit of an underground black-hole, with an awkward 10-minute hike from the five nearest tube stations: Charing Cross, Holborn, Covent Garden, Temple or Waterloo
Time to Heathrow: 35 minutes if you get a good cab run to Paddington for the Heathrow Express

Time to Waterloo International: three minutes by cab or bus

THE BOTTOM LINE
A double room, including VAT and service, is £10.80; English breakfast in bed is an additional £16.50 each, with 12.5 per cent optional service charge.
To cut the cost by £1.30, stay on a Friday, Saturday or Sunday night before 1 April, so you qualify for the "Brief Affair" rate of £220 including breakfast.

SIMON CALDER

Voice

WOMEN
Seeking
men

SEEKING
A COMPLETE MAN
Gorgeous black, professional female, 30s, into arts, music, dancing, travel, enjoys theatre, dining out, the arts, seeks similar interests, for friendship, maybe more.

FRIE SPIRIT
Professional lady, in mid-40s, diverse, artistic, loves travel, music, theatre, dining out, the arts, seeks similar interests, for friendship, maybe more.

AQUARIAN
Female, 30s, dark, athletic, brown hair, blue eyes, intelligent, enjoys theatre, travel, dining, dancing, and Latin American music; seeks focused, considerate, financially-gentleman.

ROMANTIC MAN
Male, late 20s, 30s, dark, athletic, brown hair, blue eyes, intelligent, enjoys theatre, travel, dining out, the arts, seeks similar female, for friendship, backpacking abroad and who knows? 224762

HAPPY GUY
Male, late 20s, 30s, dark, athletic, brown hair, blue eyes, intelligent, enjoys theatre, travel, dining out, the arts, seeks similar female, for friendship, backpacking abroad and who knows? 224762

READY TO GO!
Female, 30s, 35s, dark, athletic, brown hair, blue eyes, intelligent, enjoys theatre, travel, dining out, the arts, seeks similar female, for friendship, backpacking abroad and who knows? 224762

TURK LOVER
Male, late 20s, 30s, dark, athletic, brown hair, blue eyes, intelligent, enjoys theatre, travel, dining out, the arts, seeks similar female, for friendship, backpacking abroad and who knows? 224762

ARAB GUY
Male, late 20s, 30s, dark, athletic, brown hair, blue eyes, intelligent, enjoys theatre, travel, dining out, the arts, seeks similar female, for friendship, backpacking abroad and who knows? 224762

ASIAN MAN
Male, late 20s, 30s, dark, athletic, brown hair, blue eyes, intelligent, enjoys theatre, travel, dining out, the arts, seeks similar female, for friendship, backpacking abroad and who knows? 224762

FROM NORTH TO SOUTH
Female, athletic, black male, 20s, 30s, dark, athletic, brown hair, blue eyes, intelligent, enjoys theatre, travel, dining out, the arts, seeks similar female, for friendship, backpacking abroad and who knows? 224762

**TO respond to any ad, Calls cost
the normal BT premium rate of
£1 per minute at all times**

SHY BUT FEisty
Attractive female social worker, 30s, into arts, music, dancing, travel, enjoys theatre, travel, dining out, the arts, seeks similar interests, for friendship, maybe more.

DON'T Forget!
Place your own Voice
Personals® ad FREE on
0800 216 351

PER SEE
Woman, looking for a special alien, captivator/aquarian male, 30s, 40s, dark, athletic, brown hair, blue eyes, intelligent, enjoys theatre, travel, dining out, the arts, seeks similar interests, for friendship, maybe more.

ATTRACTION
CANCERIAN
40, blonde/brown, 57", tall, athletic, brown hair, blue eyes, honest and sincere, for friendship, possible relationship.

ROCK CLIMBER
Male, late 40s, seeks male rock climber, mate. Surey area, 224774

READY TO GO!
Male, late 20s, 30s, dark, athletic, brown hair, blue eyes, intelligent, enjoys theatre, travel, dining out, the arts, seeks similar female, for friendship, backpacking abroad and who knows? 224762

WARM/HUMITY IN LONDON
Tall, attractive, blonde female, early 40s, seeks down-to-earth man, to share films, meals, outfit, wine, chat and whatever may happen. 224773

ARAB GUY
Young, handsome black gentleman, 31, 37, very good-looking, seeks female, 25-30, to share life's experiences and maybe more. 224762

SPACE MAN
Asian male, 38, seeks female, 25-35, for friendship, nights out, food, music, arts, cinema, indoor, outdoor, possibly more. Brazil. 224762

TYPICAL CANCERIAN
Male, young, slim build, dark, athletic, sport, slim, into sports, many interests, N/S, seeks partner, gentle-natured, adventurous, likes to share life with. East Anglia/London. 224770

CALL:
0897 554 555

CHARMING AND STYLISH
Lively, positive, sophisticated, well-travelled Asian female, 30s, 40s, honest and sincere, for friendship, possible relationship.

COCKNEY REBEL
Shy lady, dark, curly hair, man to have a little fun, likes dancing, dining & moving around, all makes answered. 224917

SEEKS MR SOFT
Shy lady, dark, curly hair, man to have a little fun, likes dancing, dining & moving around, all makes answered. 224917

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CALL:
0897 554 555

SHY BUT FEisty
Attractive female social worker, 30s, into arts, music, dancing, travel, dining, dancing, fun, male, aged 30-40, any nationality. London. 225082

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Male, young, slim build, dark, athletic, sport, slim, into sports, many interests, N/S, seeks partner, gentle-natured, adventurous, likes to share life with. East Anglia/London. 224770

ARE YOU A SPLIT APART?
I'm 35, solvent, sporty, successful, single, seeking a compatible, well-travelled Asian female, 30s, 40s, for friendship, possible relationship.

CHARMING AND STYLISH
Lively, positive, sophisticated, well-travelled Asian female, 30s, 40s, honest and sincere, for friendship, possible relationship.

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SHY BUT FEisty
Attractive female social worker, 30s, into arts, music, dancing, travel, dining, dancing, fun, male, aged 30-40, any nationality. London. 225082

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MODERN MANNERS: YOUR CUT-OUT-AND-KEEP GUIDE TO SURVIVING THE MINEFIELD

Dear Serena

Dear Serena,
I seem to have caused offence to a large group of people who, until recently, had very little ability to fight back. But they have recently equipped themselves with powerful and vocal lobby groups. As a result, I have already lost my job, but they seem still to be after my blood. Can you suggest the best way to put things right?

Glenn, Lancaster Gate

There's very little you can do to put it right, but a grovelling apology might be a good place to start. Try something like: "I am a Christian, and believe in reincarnation. The fact that I am unable to open my mouth without putting my foot in it is obviously intended by some higher power. I must have been a seditious prat in a previous life. It is karma."

Dear Serena,
I am 37, unmarried and two months pregnant. The father is currently

being good about it, though I'm not sure if we're going to stay together as our history isn't entirely smooth and we were on the verge of calling it a day when this happened. I am going to go ahead with having the baby regardless, as I am afraid that time is getting tight and this might be my last chance to have a child, at least by someone for whom I have feelings. I am certainly able to cope financially, but there is one problem. How do I tell my overprotective Catholic parents? I can't believe that I have this problem at my age, but they still see me as an irresponsible adolescent despite the fact that I have been running a multinational company for the last six years.

Milie, Hertford

Of course they still think of you as an irresponsible adolescent: they are your parents. However you break this news to them, they will continue to think that you are an irresponsible adolescent. They will probably think (or at least

persuade themselves that) this child is the result of your first naive foray into sexual relations, and that you have been "caught" like so many teenagers before you. At least you have two strikes in your favour: as Catholics, they are hardly going to urge abortion and, because of your age, they have probably been nursing fears for some time now that you will never furnish them with grandchildren. You have about a month's grace to work out a plan, because it's easiest to keep stumped from all but your best friend until you're sure nothing ghastly has gone wrong. After that, you have a duty to tell

the old folk as soon as possible, as springing the news and the baby on them in short succession would probably push them into a state of total acopia. If you really can't bear to tell them face to face, make the most of your position at work. Wait until you have to go to Los Angeles, then call from your hotel room where they can't track you down and say "Mum, dad, I'm in Los Angeles and I'm going to have a baby in October. I'll be back in two weeks and we can discuss it then." Then slam the phone down so you won't be too guilt-ridden by the sound of their screams.

Dear Serena,
How do you like your coffee?

Kenneth, Tynemouth

Smooth, strong and rich,

with just a hint of decadence. Forget the feel of velvet and silk, as velvet has always tended to make me gag. And never serve it instant from a jar; or your party full of advertising tondies will look very quizzical indeed.

Dear Serena,
My friend Belinda has been going on about her wonderful new man Marcus for months, and we were all dying to meet him. Imagine my horror when we bumped into each other in the street one day and it turned out that Marcus was someone I had a disastrous one-night stand with 10 years ago and was relieved to have never heard from again. He showed no signs of recognising me, so maybe the secret is safe. Should I tell her? What do you think?

Mandy, Exeter

Under no circumstances, unless he did something like steal your credit cards or torture your cat. Belinda will not appreciate knowing that you know what

her dream lover is like in bed, and he will no doubt have been as keen to forget the whole incident as you were. And don't spend too much time feeling smug about our little secret: remember, if the sex was disastrous, it's just as likely to have been you as him that got it wrong.

Dear Serena,
Is it reasonable to ask a boyfriend/husband to buy tampons?

Richard, Acton

Only if he's passing one of the larger branches of a major chain chemist. Any man sent to the corner shop for Women's Things has a right to refuse, or at least to demand that she buy a pack of condoms the next time she patronises the same shop.

Knotty problems with the world today?
Write to Dear Serena, *The Independent*, 18th Floor, 1 Canada Square, London E14 5DL, where they will be treated with customary sympathy

ARIES

THE WEATHER'S been variable, at best. Now you feel you are moving into safe haven, you dirty British coozer. The good news is you'll be able to shift some pig-head and settle some bills. There will be flashes of intuition, like a glimmering from the depths, but you may be advised to store this rather than act on it. You may feel less effective, but restraint can have more power than expression. Inner beauty may be useful after all.

TAURUS

YOU WILL know the song "Don't Worry, Be Happy". Do not give it head room. You have a talent for worry and the more you worry the more money you'll make, the nicer you'll be to your friends, the more your spouse will like you. Venus is square with Saturn and likes the discipline (we needn't spin out the implications). Your loyalty, so rare these days, may be misconstrued as a fear of moving into the unknown. Beware vulgar minds. AS MERCURY goes into Pisces, the most

GEMINI

peculiar sign of the Zodiac, you may find your battiness gets an unwelcome burst of energy. Which head will you wear today? The warm one? Or the gay one? Or the cold, analytical one? No, the one that goes with your shoes, of course! Sensitivity to the mental processes around you give you a form of telepathy. Now you'll find out what people really think of you (uh oh). Don't protect yourself too much. YOUR EMOTIONAL meteorology looks interesting. There are sunny opportunities in

CANCER

the ridge of high pressure that's coming your way but only if you take your clothes off. Your anxieties about the way you look underneath are the worst form of egotism. There is one who will see your loveliness. An added inducement: normally you pay for this pleasure with depression, but this time you get away with it (Lord knows you deserve it). IF YOU'VE been feeling the need for a little spice in your life, here comes the tabasco. You

POPPY FOLLY

YOUR STARS: IT COULD HAPPEN

The trouble (and you may be dubious about that singular) with Aquarians is that they preach freedom but live as prisoners, wrapped in clouds, in the heavily guarded hold of their souls. The tops of the double-perimeter fence, where they're dressed with tiger wire, is decorated with the bodies of those who tried to penetrate the Aquarian secret. It was a fool's errand; even Aquarians don't know what the secret is, and nor would you want to if you were they.

But there are none the less a number of positive qualities, and here they are. Aquarians are assiduous name-droppers (though the name they drop most is their own), and very attentive foul-weather friends (they like you better the more you bleed). Aquarians also have a very significant talent for adultery, and continually take the gold medal for infidelity - to people, ideas and political parties (Lana Turner, Harold Macmillan). Aquarians have no beliefs but

many opinions, and this is a good thing. When they do have beliefs (like Mary D, thousands will die). They confuse ideas with ideals, and sounds with sense. They believe themselves to be talented, and sometimes they are, but still they are unable to explain the presence in their sign of Michael Bentine, and Larry Adler, and Denis Norden, and George Michael and Norman Wisdom and Ian Gow and Jane Seymour and Libby Purves and Tony Blackburn and James Callaghan.

There is something about Aquarians which makes you want to try and kill them (Ronald Reagan, Abraham Lincoln, Kit Marlowe, Louis XIV), and something else about them, behind the tiger wire, which makes them want to kill themselves (Brendan Behan, James Dean, Sir Thomas More, Eva Braun). It's true they are a well-meaning sign, they just don't have the restraint, the caution, the discipline, or the manners to express it.

LEO

are inspired with originality, power and intelligence. It's the recipe for chaos, of course, and it may be difficult for you to manage the consequences of genius (you are more conventional than you like to admit). This foray into the higher unknown will be exhausted by the end of the week. Intelligence will be useful (it's a two-edged sword in your case).

NO, YOU aren't sick, but vivid images may present themselves during the day. If you go

VIRGO

very still and trust in silence, you will find you can read the minds of those around you (this isn't something Virgos actually want to do). As your disciplines dissolve, people will see you relaxed, assume it's the real you and will tell you their secrets (the fools). Sex is strangely enjoyable (especially for someone who doesn't like strange sex). Relax. Don't do it. IF YOU HAVE a fault (many Librans may resist this opening) it's not one that you can be

LIBRA

reproached with this week. Your tendency to drop things before they're finished, a tendency to overlook details - these characteristics are obliterated by your ruling planet's square aspect with Saturn. Now you find yourself obeying a new sense of structure, of order - and this makes you feel above-average sexy (as does the opposite, and everything in between). THOSE DESIRES you have that have no name (there are some things even you flinch from) - now is the time to approach

SCORPIO

them. Pluto, the planet of your unsavoury depths, is enjoying a lubricating aspect with Mercury, and this eases entry into your secrets. If it's hard to get in, it's harder getting out. You must tame what is wild, or at least prepare a secure area where these desires can be domesticated (when the divorce is over).

WHY WON'T things go as well as you deserve? What have you done to deserve this

SAGITTARIUS

continuing blockage? First your energy is down, you're working on three of your six cylinders, and worse, when you try and explain, it comes out all wrong. Fact has never been your thing but just now you can't even express the truth and beauty you pride yourself on. You'll end up feeling guilty about the mess - either keep quiet or keep moving. THIS IS what you've been waiting for: this aspect with Venus - even though it's seen as

CAPRICORN

negative, any connection with Venus exalts you. Where you are thought desecrated you are radiant, where you've been slandered as materialistic you are giving off a spiritual plasma. Less substantial signs fall into orbit and make you the centre of their motion; they must maintain their velocity or crash. Thus your creativity can crush those you love. IT'S QUIET Too quiet. You have the appetite for action but a strange vagueness keeps you

AQUARIUS

quiet. There is a membrane between you and the world, you are a prisoner of this prophylactic. The data you will not be available from others, you must turn inwards, only solitary practices will reveal what you truly want (don't get caught, solitude is an eccentricity to be feared). Be careful of that which is overtaking you from the rear. A POOR aspect with Venus casts your material life in a poor light. Afflicted Pisceans (who are usually compensated for astrological

PISCES

deformity by money) will have to choose between health and wealth. Dislike of the beneficiaries named in your will may spur you to look after yourself. There will be difficulties with girls (the ones you like are difficult) but not with boys. Male Pisceans are notorious for swimming both ways (even the ones that look like pike).

CLASSIC CARTOONS

MARTIN PLIMMER ON
LESLIE STARKE



"Here I am, Dominic!"

LESLIE STARKE was a big six-footer with a concentrated vision of the world. His cartoons were neat, self-contained jewels, glowing with charm, precisely engineered to express life's small yet exquisite incidents. Starke started cartooning at the age of 36, though he had supplied caricatures to his local paper, the *Fife Herald*, as a youth. During the war, though serving in the RAF, his drawing career took off thanks to Ministry of Food advertisement

SO MANY stories and so little space to cover them in. I am reduced to taking swipes at them as they buzz past like flies, in the hope of swatting some of them.

Tom (the p is silent) has broken his wrist at school during rugby. Rugby, I thought on hearing this, is a dangerous game with few of the mitigations of soccer. But there was an extra little twist, of the sort that makes fact so much more telling than fiction: he hadn't broken his wrist while playing, but on the way to the game. He'd tripped over his own shoelace.

It means I finally stand a chance of beating him at *Goldeneye* on the Nintendo64, in which we race up and down corridors trying to blow each other's virtual brains out in virtual proxy. My lifelong atopographia balances his reduced dexterity and makes it a far better game. Yes, I approve of computer games; they can be mentally stimulating as part of a calorie-controlled brain diet. Some of the skills may even be transferable.

Usually, however, fact beats fiction hands down. Take my over-close encounter with the "work of art" consisting of 65 sets of traffic lights on a roundabout on the Isle of Dogs in east London. The lack of road signs led to my cheap crack about there being no doubt, somewhere, an artwork consisting of a heap of signs.

Reality beat me to it. Pierre Vivant, who perpetrated the traffic lights and who works in Paris and Oxford, has already made a pyramid out of road signs in Cardiff, which has commended itself - for

PUZZLEMASTER

BY CHRIS MASLANKA

replicas of half-sheep in the new millennium? What will they put on carrier bags?

Let's hope it's both apt and representative. This rebus, sent in to *Puzzle Panel* by Mike Harrington of Lowestoft, certainly is.

The BBC hasn't trailed or advertised his new series. Maybe that's because it doesn't need to.

different reasons - to the city fathers, to down-and-outs and skateboarders alike. In the case of the traffic lights, philistines can still fight back. According to the Arts & Leisure department of Tower Hamlets, whose responsibility they are, the work is on probation for six months from the date of turning on (21 December 1998) in case it causes accidents.

This is the artistic imperative: if a thing is thinkable, do it and call it art. Has a sheep been sawn in half? No? Do it! The critics will undoubtedly fall over each other to discover meaning in it. This degrading of the language of art results in a peak of the public's appreciation of art in Monet, who now features on my Tesco's "bag for life". I feel the phrase *Monet Bags* might be more apt. Will we buy little

Comments and contributions to independent@puzzlemaster.co.uk

Puzzle Panel, 1.30pm Fridays, R4

Last week's solution

1) Home & Dome must be at P & N or vice versa.

2) 65 sets of lights have a total of 8 X 8 X 8 * (keep going until you've written 8 a total of 65 times over)

independent states.

THE FIRST week of February and already an entrant for this year's "Hard Luck" award. The Ancient Woodpusher (AW) was

playing a few friendly games against the Doyen (TD) when this position arose.

White is on the bar. Should he double? The answer is a resounding no. White is not even the favourite in this position. If he doubles black

should beaver (turn the cube to 4 and keep it on his side of the board). Even if white escapes one of his back men from black's home board and black stays on the bar he still won't have a double. However, TD did double and AW took, but didn't beaver.

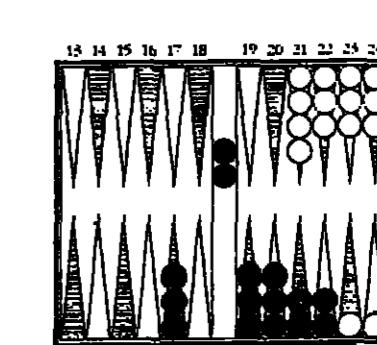
TD's next two rolls were 65

played 24/18, 23/18 and 66

played 18/62!. AW continued to

BACKGAMMON

CHRIS BRAY



stay on the bar *ad infinitum*.

Eventually he just managed to save the backgammon! AW of course had seen it all before - after all, not for nothing is part of his sobriquet "Ancient" - and he proceeded quietly on with the next game. Not for him the low-flying dice cup or the manic gesticulations of the Tempestuous Turk. He phlegmatically accepted what the fates had dealt him, and just got on with it.

The lesson to be learnt from this sorry tale is that you must remember that the only important game is the next one. By all means learn from the game that has just been completed, but don't dwell on it unnecessarily.

SUNDAY TELEVISION & RADIO

BBC1

7.35 Match of the Day (31/1533), 8.30 Breakfast with Frost (40303), 9.30 Heaven and Earth (79378), 10.30 Pomide (22857), 11.00 Match of Their Day (2736), 11.30 Countryfile (2465), 12.00 On the Record (50858), 1.00 EastEnders (65575).

2.25 **Film:** In Search of the Castaways (Robert Stevenson 1962 US), Jules Verne tale starring Maurice Chevalier (T) (55591).

4.00 Are You Being Served? (755), 4.30 MasterChef (1993 (S3)), 5.00 News; Weather (881207), 5.20 Local News and Weather (559367), 5.25 Songs of Praise (10357).

6.00 Last of the Summer Wine. Something horrible stirs in the woods (S) (T) (804).

6.30 Antiques Roadshow. From Cernouska, Angus. Finds include first editions of *The Beano* and *The Dandy* (S) (56556).

7.35 Five Go Mad in the Kitchen (S) (T) (55568).

7.20 Holiday Guide to... America. New York, Florida and the Pacific Coast Highway (S) (T) (191282).

8.00 The Scarlet Pimpernel. 3/3. The last of this highly disappointing adaptation of the Baroness Orczy classic. The Dauphin is being held prisoner by the Republicans. When he is captured by a masked intruder, Robespierre orders Chauvelin to find the boy before news of the disappearance gets out (S) (2156).

9.30 The Lakes. More from this steamy Lakeland saga (S) (T) (848281).

10.10 News; Weather (T) (403649).

10.25 Unfinished Business. Sitcom about a divorced couple (S) (517261).

10.55 Fmt Alan Partridge. Squirm-inducing comedy with Steve Coogan (R) (S) (T) (205738).

11.25 The Big End (S) (T) (622620).

11.55 **Film:** Barbarians at the Gate (Glenn Jordan 1993 US), Satire with James Garner (S) (700533).

1.35 The Sky at Night (201732). To 2am.

BBC2

8.45 French Experience (7214303), 8.30 Little Mouse on the Prairie (8455842), 8.50 Alvin and the Chipmunks (9539958), 9.45 Wayne Manifesto (S) (498736), 9.45 Wild House (5672620), 10.05 No Sweet (9045991), 10.30 Grange Hill (20293), 11.00 Kids and Cops (6735587), 11.25 Grange Hill (6735674), 11.55 O Zone (507754), 12.05 The Simpsons (133426), 12.30 Robot Wars (66465), 1.00 Around Westminster (79361), 1.30 Sunday Grandstand (2702057), 1.35 Skating (2599007), 2.00 Snooker (22233), 3.40 Racing (5863804), 4.00 Rugby (899587), 5.30 Animal Zone (5498804), 5.45 Watch Out Britain (2534668), 5.30 Chimpanzee Diary (862621).

5.50 The Natural World. A look at a typical English garden as it passes through various seasons. Narrated by Patricia Routledge (R) (S) (566194).

6.45 Skiing. Hazel Irvine introduces coverage of the 1999 world alpine skiing championship from Vail in Colorado, featuring the women's downhill (S) (588649).

7.30 The Money Programme. A look at the way music is sold and consumed (910).

8.00 **Choice:** Bookmark: Elizabeth Bowen - Death of the Heart. Remembers author Elizabeth Bowen. See Profile of the Day, below (S) (T) (579503).

8.50 Monet's Gardens (S) (668842).

9.00 A History of Alternative Comedy. Sex and censorship (S) (T) (3842).

9.30 Gimme Gimme Gimme. Tom meets a gorgeous Italian (R) (59129).

10.00 Trade Secrets (S) (T) (414755).

10.10 **Film:** The Van (Stephen Frears 1996 UK). Engaging adaptation of Roddy Doyle's novel about an unemployed baker who sets himself up in the fast-food business against the backdrop of Ireland's 1990 World Cup campaign (S) (T) (402674).

11.50 Snooker (S) (199587), 12.40 Tank Commandos (T) (796497), 2.00 BBC Learning Zone: Further Education - Travel and Tourism (30601), 4.00 Languages: The French Experience: 1-4 (14885), 5.00 Business and Training: Computers Don't Bite: Business - First Steps (2404779). To 5.45am.

10.00 Tarrant on TV. More foreign TV with Chris Tarrant (S) (T) (267353).

10.30 ITN News; Weather (T) (263991).

10.45 **Choice:** The South Bank Show. Brummie reggae band UB40. See Documentary of the Day, below (S) (T) (7707858).

11.45 Faith and Music (540571), 12.15 Still in Bed with McDinner (2534514).

12.50 **Film:** Full Moon in Blue Water (Peter Masterson 1988 US). Comedy drama with Gene Hackman (498137).

ITV LWT

6.00 GMTV (90842), 8.00 Diggit (218813), 9.25 Art Attack (4078674), 9.50 The Worst (856997), 10.20 Extreme Ghostbusters (903262), 10.50 Sunday Morning (803733), 11.50 My Favourite Hymn (6324755), 12.20 Crosscall (2784787), 12.50 News; Weather (28494736), 1.00 Jonathan Dimbleby (227937), 1.50 That's Esther (368594), 2.50 Anatomy of Disaster (555571).

3.35 **Film:** Bionic Showdown (Alan Levi 1989 US). Six-million-dollar man Lee Majors and bionic woman Lindsay Wagner are brought out of retirement (S) (731991).

5.25 Big Screen (6173736).

5.55 Dream Ticket. Melanie Sykes in Nashville, USA, and Nick Clarke plays polo in Wiltshire (274834).

6.25 London Tonight (485939).

6.45 ITN News; Weather (T) (166552).

7.00 Bill Bryson's Notes from a Small Island (S) (T) (2277).

7.30 Coronation Street. Hayley becomes suspicious of Roy (T) (736).

8.00 **Heartbeat.** Soft-focus 1960s-set police drama. Gina finds herself accused of taking drugs as she attempts to rekindle her singing career. And following a windfall, David makes a foolish investment (S) (T) (86168).

9.00 London's Burning. Firefighting soap. Blue Watch look on helplessly as Jack's problems come to a head. And Jean has some startling news for Sicknote (S) (T) (8604).

10.00 Tarrant on TV. More foreign TV with Chris Tarrant (S) (T) (267353).

10.30 ITN News; Weather (T) (263991).

10.45 **Choice:** The South Bank Show. Brummie reggae band UB40. See Documentary of the Day, below (S) (T) (7707858).

11.45 Faith and Music (540571), 12.15 Still in Bed with McDinner (2534514).

12.50 **Film:** Full Moon in Blue Water (Peter Masterson 1988 US). Comedy drama with Gene Hackman (498137).

2.35 Seaguest 2032 (3678427). To 3.25am.

Channel 4

6.40 Dog City (8446523), 7.00 Magic Roundabout (3431574), 7.05 Animal Alphabet (2279342), 7.20 Saty's Lighthouse (2257211), 7.45 Big Alert! (8253), 8.15 Saved by the Bell (2255568), 8.40 City Guys (6326945), 9.10 Cadog (3982367), 9.45 Planet Pop (1003281), 10.00 The Waltons (858007), 11.00 Hollyoaks (2569891), 12.30 Dishes (6033668), 12.40 Dishes (6597522), 3.30 Collectors' Lot (222164).

3.40 **Film:** Love Me or Leave Me (Charles Vidor 1955 US). Biopic of singer Ruth Etting starring Doris Day and James Cagney (25846587).

6.00 Time Team. Tony Robinson leads a team of archaeologists to Smallhythe in Kent to uncover Henry VI's dockyard from the time of Agincourt (T) (59552).

7.00 Remembering Jacqueline du Pré. Another chance to see Christopher Nupen's Without Walls documentary profile of cellist Jacqueline du Pré (R) (T) (8642).

8.00 **The Phil.** Continuing this docu-soap about the Philharmonia Orchestra. Principal clarinetist Mike Wright plays a solo which requires bicycle clips. And principal flautist Ken Smith expresses his surprise at his mother's taste in music (T) (9910).

9.00 In Search of Law and Order. Roger Graef presents a series which looks at how the UK can import ideas from America to deal with youth crime. Tonight, he focuses on how Boston officials attempted to stem an epidemic of juvenile killings (T) (2674).

10.00 **Choice:** City Hall (Harold Becker 1996 US). Political thriller starring Al Pacino, John Cusack and Bridget Fonda. See Film of the Day, below (S) (T) (7707858).

12.05 Boyz Unlimited (R) (S) (T) (673663), 12.35 NME Premier Live Shows (2824040), 1.40 Later.

1.45 Babylon (R) (S) (T) (639750), 2.00 4 Later: Dark Skies (R) (S) (T) (321082), 2.50 Dweebs (R) (S) (1520866).

3.45 **Film:** The Music Teacher (Gerard Corbiau 1988 Bel). Operatic drama from Belgium (553885). To 4.50am.

Channel 5

6.00 Wildlife SOS (9085007), 6.30 Havakazzo (8894858), 7.00 Dappledown Farm (610303), 7.30 Minshakal (274271), 7.45 Wim's House (836773), 8.00 The Mission (4133303), 8.30 The Revelation Game (162674), 9.00 Sticlin' Around (405026), 9.30 Mirbar (907820), 10.00 Mirror, Mirror (707810), 10.30 Valley Between (4046910), 11.00 USA High (997378), 11.30 Singled Out (2099007), 12.00 Mag (6028900), 13.00 5 News (8072891), 1.20 Frostrup on Sunday (80500823), 1.50 Movie Chart Show (1164397), 2.20 Exclusive (862755), 3.30 Family Affairs Omnibus (6333985), 5.25 Serious Money (21048868).

5.55 **Film:** Bushwhacked (Greg Beeman 1995 US). Kidcy comedy about an incompetent delivery man (Home Alone's Daniel Stern) who hides out in a scout camp when he is wrongly accused of murder (S) (T) (8681029).

7.30 5 News and Sport (S) (6570945).

8.00 Wild Secrets. Wildlife documentary. The Australian camera team of Des and Jen Bartlett take a detailed look at the world of the kangaroo (S) (T) (149251).

9.00 **Film:** Seventh Floor (Ian Barry 1983 Aus). Rather odd "psychological" thriller starring Brooke Shields as a widow who takes her dead husband's place on the board of a Sydney advertising agency. But another female executive becomes jealous and schemes with the creative director to oust her from the company (S) (T) (8979457).

10.50 Wing and a Prayer. Legal drama series set in the north of England. Anna takes on a large pharmaceutical company (T) (6060533).

11.50 The Comedy Network (6302129), 12.20 Sports Talk with Steve Scott (412205), 12.50 Ice Hockey - NHL (S) (7132514), 4.40 Tots and Fibs (R) (S) (6195595), 5.30 Move On Up (R) (S) (46338717), 5.30 Serious Money (9022392). To 6am.

ITV/Regions

BBC1 N Ireland. As LWT except: 10.25 Let Me Entertain You (51251), 10.45 Unfinished Business (205736), 11.25 Im Alan Parton (623530), 11.55 The Big End (424200), 12.25 Film: Barbarians at the Gate (T) (515161), 2.05 BBC News 21 (5045856).

Anglia. As LWT except: 12.20 Anglia News Sunday Supplement (2784787), 2.50 Radio On (5025161), 3.00 Radio West (5025162), 3.30 March, She Wrote (3765951), 4.30 Columbo (419231), 4.30 Wildlife Rescue (365351), 4.35 Anglia News (1566568), 4.45 Stil in Bed with McDiarmid (65156), 4.50 Cybernet (4715333), 4.50 Soundbox (5253330), 4.50 ITV Nightscreen (6604904), 4.50 Coronation Street (71750).

Central. As LWT except: 12.20 LWT News (578342), 12.25 Newsweek (578342), 12.45 Central News (26405571), 2.50 It's Your Show (8861951), 3.25 Murder, She Wrote (3765951), 4.35 Film: City beneath the Sea (363194), 6.00 Heart of the Country (3001), 6.30 Central News and Sport (2561509), 4.45 5 News (5076157), 5.00 It's Your Show (71750).

HTV Wales. As LWT except: 11.50 My Welsh Agenda (4506571), 12.15 Welsh Agenda (647232), 12.45 HTV News (26405571), 2.50 Film: The Beautiful Jungle (T) (555163), 4.30 Drama: Liu (Pansy) (3765209), 4.50 Sunday Sport (386552), 4.50 HTV News (5876568), 4.50 Stil in Bed with McDiarmid (65156), 12.45 - 3.00 As Anglia.

HTV West. As LWT except: 12.20 HTV News (3691201), 2.50 On the Road (3385521), 2.50 Sport (3385521), 3.00 Crime: Murder, She Wrote (3691201), 4.30 Coronation Street (86593), 6.00 Local News (247261), 6.35 Goal on Sunday/Cafe Sport (279571), 12.50 Phil Collins: Live in Paris (8852031), 5.40 Gobtawys (512317), 6.10 West Attraction Plus (3685521).

Meridian. As LWT except: 12.20 Weekend Match (2784787), 2.50 Columbo (56102351), 4.40 Film: Agatha Christie's A Caribbean Mystery (4971026), 6.30 Westcountry News Extra (6599451), 6.35 Westcountry News (566681), 12.15 Stil in Bed with McDiarmid (65156), 12.45 - 5.00 As Anglia.

Westcountry. As LWT except: 12.20 Weekend Match (2784787), 2.50 Columbo (56102351), 4.40 Film: Agatha Christie's A Caribbean Mystery (4971026), 6.30 Westcountry Extra (6599451), 6.35 Westcountry News (566681), 12.15 Stil in Bed with McDiarmid (65156), 12.45 - 5.00 As Anglia.

Yorkshire/Tyne Tees. As LWT except: 12.20 Carnival (591342), 12.45 Yorkshire Sunday News (591342), 1.30 Film: That Got Away (5127891), 2.00 Coronation Street (86593), 6.00 Local News (247261), 6.35 Goal on Sunday/Cafe Sport (279571), 12.50 Phil Collins: Live in Paris (8852031), 5.40 Cybernet (5776972),

SATURDAY RADIO

RADIO 1
(97.8-99.8MHz FM)
7.00 Mark Goodier. **10.00** Chris Moyles. **1.00** Lisa Jenson. **3.00** Radio 1's R'n'B Chart. **5.00** Pete Tong. **7.00** Danny Rampling. Lovegroove Dance Party. **9.00** Westwood - Radio 1 Rap Show. **12.00** Radio 1 Reggae Dancehall Nitro. **2.00** Essential Mix: Optical and Ed Rush. **4.00** - **6.30** Annie Nightingale.

RADIO 2
(88.9-92MHz FM)
6.00 Mo Dutta. **8.05** Brian Matthew. **10.00** Steve Wright's Saturday Show. **1.00** The Smith Lectures. **1.30** The Newly Discovered Casebook of Sherlock Holmes. **2.00** Alan Freeman. **3.30** Johnnie Walker. **5.30** Paul Gambaccini. **7.00** The American Trilogy. **8.00** The Dave Matthews Band in Concert. **9.00** Suzi Quatro: Rockin' with Suzi Q. **10.00** Bob Harris' **10.00** Annie Parsons. **4.00** - **7.00** Mo Dutta.

RADIO 3
(90.2-92.4MHz FM)
6.00 On Air.
9.00 CD Review.
12.00 Private Passions.
1.00 The Radio 3 Lunchtime Concert. (R)
2.00 Best of 3.
3.00 Young Artists' Forum.
4.00 The Secrets of Orchestration.
5.00 Jazz Record Requests.
6.00 Jazz Century.
6.30 Opera on 3. Verdi's musical drama set in 14th-century Genoa, where patricians and plebeians are vying for power. One of the composer's most sensuously lyrical operas, with atmospheric musical seascapes and nocturnal romances and eloquent ensembles, and a convincingly rounded portrait of Boccanegra, the self-made man who rises to become doge and sacrifices himself for his daughter's happiness. With Karita Mattila, soprano (Amelia), Plácido Domingo, tenor (Adorno), Alexandru Agache, baritone (Boccanegra) and Roberto Scanduzzi, bass (Jacopo Fiesco). Metropolitan Opera Chorus and Orchestra/James Levine. Act 1. See Pick of the Day.
7.00 New York Stories.

PICK OF THE DAY

AN ILLUMINATING account of her last great work *Oroonoko*, *Novel Encounters* with Aphra Behn (2.30pm R4) examines her story of a West African prince tricked into slavery. Inspired by Behn's visit to the British colony of Surinam in 1663, we hear from a number of interested parties, including Gregory Doran, director of a stage adaptation for the RSC.

A shame they couldn't air the old one, by Southerne, but Peter Timmswood's *The House Swap* (3pm R4) justifies its slot: shades of Chekhov. Laurie Lee and Edward Albee hang over this tale of marital disaffection, which stars Penelope Wilton. Tonight's Opera on 3 (6.30pm R3), Verdi's *Simon Boccanegra*, stars Plácido Domingo (right).

DOMINIC CAVENDISH

7.30 Simon Boccanegra, Act 2.

8.25 The Met Opera Quiz.

Martin Bernheimer puts listeners' questions to John Ardoin, Speight Jenkins and Michelle Kirsh.

8.55 Simon Boccanegra, Act 3.

10.05 The Brains Trust: Leading thinkers tackle challenging questions sent in by listeners.

Joining Joan Bakewell are scientist Paul Davies, historian Orlando Figes, theologian Angela Tilby and professor of political theory David McLellan.

10.20 Birmingham Quartet.

Tchaikovsky: String Quartet No 3 in E flat minor; Op 30. (R)

11.30 Jazz on 3.

1.00 - **6.00** Through the Night.

RADIO 4

(92.4-94.6MHz FM)

6.00 News Briefing.

6.05 Sports Desk.

6.10 Open Country.

6.57 Weather.

7.00 Today.

9.00 Home Truths.

10.00 News: Loose Ends.

11.00 News: Food Programme.

11.30 From Our Own Correspondent.

12.00 News: Money Box.

12.30 The Ghost of Number Ten.

12.55 Weather.

1.00 News.

1.35 Any Questions?

2.00 News: Any Answers? 0870 010 0444.

2.30 Novel Encounters with Aphra Behn. See Pick of the Day.

3.00 News: The Saturday Play: The House Swap. See Pick of the Day.

5.00 Jazz Record Requests.

6.00 Jazz Century.

6.30 Opera on 3. Verdi's musical drama set in 14th-century Genoa, where patricians and plebeians are vying for power. One of the composer's most sensuously lyrical operas, with atmospheric musical seascapes and nocturnal romances and eloquent ensembles, and a convincingly rounded portrait of Boccanegra, the self-made man who rises to become doge and sacrifices himself for his daughter's happiness. With Karita Mattila, soprano (Amelia), Plácido Domingo, tenor (Adorno), Alexandru Agache, baritone (Boccanegra) and Roberto Scanduzzi, bass (Jacopo Fiesco). Metropolitan Opera Chorus and Orchestra/James Levine. Act 1. See Pick of the Day.

7.00 New York Stories.

4.00 News; Weekend Woman's Hour.

5.00 Saturday PM.

5.54 Shipping Forecast.

5.57 Weather.

6.00 Six O'clock News.

6.15 Live from London.

7.00 News; Saturday Review.

7.45 Letter from Laramie. Fraser Harrison writes an audio letter from his cowboy childhood in his back garden in 1940s Liverpool. Do big boys still need the Wild West?

8.00 News; The Archive Hour: Born Again in a New Condition. Author David Dabydeen uses diaries and letters to explore the relationship between black people and Britain from the 16th century to the Second World War.

9.00 News; The Classic Serial:

Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands. By Jorge Amado, dramatised in three parts by Stuart Morris. 3: Second Coming'. In Salvador da Bahia, Brazil, the young widow Dona Flor has married the respectable, bassoon-playing pharmacist, Dr Teodoro. But she is not allowed to forget the dissolute Vatinho, her first husband. With Lesley Carvalho, Tristan Sturrock and John Rowe. Director David Hunter.

10.00 News and Weather.

11.00 News; Scaling the Mountain. Robert Dawson Scott invites a performer or composer to revisit a major musical challenge.

RADIO 4 LW

(198kHz LW)

12.00 - **12.04** News Headlines; Shipping Forecast.

RADIO 5 LIVE

(69.3-70.9MHz MW)

6.00 Dirty Tackle.

6.30 Breakfast.

9.00 Chiles on Saturday.

11.00 Move It.

11.30 Sick as a Parrot.

12.00 Sportscall.

1.00 Sport on 5. Rugby Union: the start of the Five Nations rugby championship, with Ireland v France at Lansdowne Road and Scotland v Wales at Murrayfield. Football: reports, goal news and commentary on a top game. FA Carling Premiership fixtures include Nottingham Forest v Man Utd, West Ham vs Arsenal, and Liverpool vs

5.50 - **6.00** Bells on Sunday.

RADIO 5 LIVE

(199kHz LW)

1.00 Newsdesk. **1.30** Best on Record. **2.00** The World Today.

2.30 Agenda. **3.00** The World Today. **3.15** Sports Roundup.

3.30 World Business Review.

3.45 Letter from America. **4.00** The World Today. **4.30** Omnibus.

5.00 The World Today. **5.30** - **6.00** Women Who Dared to Speak.

TALK RADIO

6.00 OK to Talk. **8.00** Danny Baker's Morning Edition. **12.00** It's Round and White - with Tom Watt. **2.00** The Sportzone - Soccer Special. **5.05** 505 with Gary Newbom and Tom Watt. **7.30** Nancy Roberts. **10.00** Dave Barnett's Phone-In with the Midnight Psychic. **2.00** - **6.00** Mike Dickin.

Middlesbrough. **6.00** Sports Report. Classified football, rugby and racing, plus reports, interviews and comment.

6.30 The Late Six-O-Six.

8.00 Dalyin UK. Richard Dalyin with news from around the UK.

9.00 The Treatment. Stuart Macorie and guests review the week's news.

10.00 Late Night Currie. Edwina Currie with the weekend's big issues, including sport in depth at 10.30, and a news briefing at 11.00. Phone 0100 905693.

1.00 - **6.00** Up All Night.

Richard Dalyin with news from Britain and around the world.

CLASSIC FM

(100-101.9MHz FM)

6.00 Sarah Lucas. **8.00**

Countdown. **11.00** Masters of Their Art. **12.00** Mike Read. **3.00** Margaret Howard. **6.00** Classic FM at the Movies. **7.00** Smooth Classics at Seven. **9.00** Opera Guide. **10.00** The Classical Quiz.

12.00 Midnight Music. **2.00** - **2.01** Evening Concert. **4.00** - **6.00** Sunday Start.

VIRGIN RADIO

(125.1-129MHz FM)

6.00 Richard Allen. **9.00** Harriet Scott. **12.00** Classic Countdown with Russ Williams. **2.00** Rock and Roll Football. **5.30** Wheels of Steel. **10.00** Janet Lee Grace.

2.00 - **6.00** Power Power.

WORLD SERVICE RADIO

(199kHz LW)

1.00 Newsdesk. **1.30** Best on Record. **2.00** The World Today.

2.30 Agenda. **3.00** The World Today. **3.15** Sports Roundup.

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3.45 Letter from America. **4.00** The World Today. **4.30** Omnibus.

5.00 The World Today. **5.30** - **6.00** Women Who Dared to Speak.

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2.30 Agenda. **3.00** The World Today. **3.15</b**

SATURDAY TELEVISION

ITV Carlton Channel 4

Channel 5

THE WEEKEND REVIEW
The Independent 6 February 1999

JASPER REES

TELEVISION REVIEW



WHEN CHANNEL 4 was launched in 1982, its main aim was to provide television for minorities whose concerns were not being addressed by the mainstream stations. Over the years, the channel has had to turn its back on that founding ideal.

Having just one ethnic minority which is significantly catered for, Americans. The modern Channel 4 schedule reminds me of PBS which carries the likes of British imports on US television. Pray tell, soon they'll start taking a direct nerve feed from NBC, and the colonisation will be complete.

I know it sounds implausible, but in a week when saw the return of *EastEnders* and the arrival of *Boys, United!* (see), the making of a pop group, there are discrepancies. Boys Unlimited is about the new programme on Channel 4 which isn't made in the USA. Don't get too excited though. *Boys, United!* (see) is about the sounds familiar; doesn't it? Now I have seen, who had Channel 4 last said a word to the public about this? Oh yes, it was just before Christmas. In the *Young Performer's Guide to Becoming A Rock Star*, Okyog, a woman, is all too familiar with the hyperbolic patter of a pop group. That's right, there are discrepancies. Boys Unlimited is a comedy, and *Boys, United!* is about a boy band. It doesn't look as though the band is going to make it. It does just about enough to outstrip the absurdity of its target subject. That's the middle class band number butters suddenly they are not enough, change of name; formerly *Clees*

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YOUR MONEY

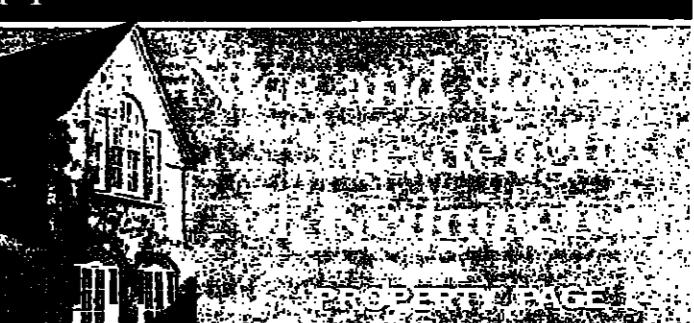
HOW TO MAKE IT • HOW TO SPEND IT



SHOPPING, PAGE 10



MOTORING, PAGE 12



BARGAIN HUNTER



Property of the week

Weekend retreat

SIX MILES from the Suffolk coast and four miles from the railway station at Wickham Market, this two-bedroom traditional brick-built cottage in Station Road, Blaxhall, would make the perfect weekend retreat. If it weren't for a few structural problems, it would cost a lot more than £74,000. Overlooking fields, it has two double bedrooms, large kitchen, downstairs bathroom and living room with stairs to the first floor. It sits on a generous plot of 80ft by 100ft, with garden and fruit trees. Details from Clarke & Simpson (01722 724200).

ROSALIND RUSSELL

Car of the week

Negotiate to accumulate

REPORTS THAT BMW dealers have more Z3s than they know what to do with seem to have been exaggerated. Fiji and Orinoco special edition Z3s have been flooding the showrooms, with their special paint jobs, air conditioning, electric convertible roofs, leather trim, heated seats and alloy wheels. But, according to BMW dealers, their stock will be quickly sold – they can sell 1.9 roadsters all day long, because it is a cheap BMW. More open to negotiation are the 23 2.8 versions. Approach an independent like Robert Hughes Management Group (01753 621221), with half a dozen on offer at £30,995, a saving on the £34,000 list price.

JAMES RUPPERT

Deal of the week

Going down – again

GO TO THE kitchen and put the kettle on. By the time you come back the blighters have dropped the cost of a mortgage even further. When will it all end? Not this week, judging by FirstMortgage's latest offer. The company has launched its cheapest-ever three-year loan, at 3.99 per cent until 31 March 2002. The mortgage is available on a loan-to-value of up to 90 per cent, with no compulsory insurance. Any catches? There is a £395 application fee. But this really is a low-cost loan. One worth going for – until next week.

NIC CICUTTI



The best card for you will depend on your individual spending patterns

WHY IT SOMETIMES PAYS TO BE LOYAL – THE TOP CARDS

Name of card, date issued, cardholders figs	Payment type, where accepted, UK outlets	Annual fee	Rate of return on money spent, %	Actual monetary value for £3,000 spent	Example of reward based on £3,000 spent	Actual monetary value for £10,000 spent
Bradford & Bingley 1995 N/A	Credit Visa/MasterCard 580,000 outlets	None	4%	£120	£120 cash back on completion of a new mortgage	£400
The GM Card 1994 500,000	Credit Visa/MasterCard 580,000 outlets	None	3%	£90	£90 off a stay at Vauxhall	£300
British Airways Diners Club 1996 N/A	Credit Visa/MasterCard Diners Club 180,000 outlets	£75	2.27%–2.64%	£68*	Two adults and two children into Alton Towers	£264*
Perse Card 1998 N/A	Credit MasterCard 500,000 outlets	£12	1.65%–2.5%	£75	One night's accommodation in Preston, Leeds or Bristol shopping	£165
Richard Plus 1996 250,000	Debit Tesco stores, petrol stations 640 outlets	None	2%	£60	£60 off Tesco shopping	£200

*Example based on typical cardholder spend. BA 25% over 75%. Existing scheme to be replaced in May 1999

DSS computer fails to cope with pension pay-outs

Pensioners are losing out – thanks to a bug in the DSS system. By Teresa Hunter

HOW MUCH is your pension worth? You don't know? Neither does the DSS, the agency which is responsible for paying retirement income to millions of people every week.

Problems at the central DSS computer has resulted in hundreds of thousands of the newly retired not receiving the pensions due to them. The chaos, with its overtone of breaking Orwellian inefficiency, has thrown a spotlight on just how powerful this single piece of technology is, and how it influences so many people's lives.

What have been described as "teething problems" with a new £100m computer has resulted in chaos, leaving one in three pensioners who retired since last April being short-changed on their entitlements.

Although in theory the basic state pension could be hit, because almost everyone retiring from full-time employment receives the full state pension nowadays, the system has mainly coped with this sum.

However, its technical wizardry completely floundered when the time came to calculate the additional State Earnings Related Pension top-up (Serps), which many people have been contributing towards

throughout their working lives. Some people have been short-changed by many pounds a week for nearly a year, and it will take more time still to resolve the problem.

Many widows have failed to receive their due widows pensions, and anyone involved in a divorce will also have found their pensions affairs in a muddle. But it is not only the retired who have been hit.

National Insurance rebates into private pensions have all but collapsed, which means that these investments missed out on last year's strong stock market performance.

But most worrying of all is the difficulty in establishing whether you have received the

correct pensions and other benefits due, or whether you are among those losing out.

Independent actuary Bryan Davis said: "The calculations involved in working out your pension rights are not very difficult. The big problem is getting hold of the records."

"The DSS computer is the only agency holding records about your earnings and National Insurance contributions going back over the years. We are all utterly dependent on it. And it doesn't work."

In a less-than-magnanimous gesture, Alistair Darling, the Social Security Secretary, announced this week that everyone affected will be compensated by a one-off payment of £10.

The computer problems suffered by so many underline the wisdom of keeping and filing old pay-slips, particularly P60s which record your pay, tax and National Insurance in any given year. Only with this evidence can you challenge the Department of Social Security over how much they pay you in retirement by way of Serps.

However, if you have saved these documents and you can use a calculator, you can work out the sums – although this can be both confusing and complicated. It is probably more practical to contact your local DSS office and ask staff there to explain how they have reached the calculation they are paying you – supplying them

with the information you have. Similarly, anyone who has expected Serps rebates to be paid into their private plan should contact their pension provider and ask them for a statement – except your insurer will be unable to tell you whether the DSS refunds have been made correctly.

The biggest problem with Serps rebates centres on age-related rebates which were made for the first time for the year 1997–1998, and should have been paid into your pension during the 1998/1999 tax year.

The computer couldn't handle the calculation and these payments have not been made. In this case, the Government is promising to pay 0.5 per cent for each month of delay, amounting to 6 per cent over a year. But many people saving towards their pensions will find this inadequate given that, despite the uncertainties of the past year, the FTSE 100 share index rose by 18 per cent last year.

A spokesman for Scottish Mutual said: "The first port of call has to be your pension provider, but he won't be able to tell you for sure whether an adequate rebate has been paid, because we don't know how much you earned."

FILE AS YOU EARN

How to stay one step ahead of the state:

- Always keep all records relating to pay and National Insurance contributions – one day you may find that you need them.
- Ask the DSS to explain
- how your pension benefit has been calculated.

Ask your pension provider for a statement detailing exactly what has been paid into your plan in the past year.

Ask your wages office to calculate what the rebate should have been. They can easily do the sum.

Past performance is not necessarily a guide to future performance. The price of investments and the income from them can go down as well as up and you may not get back as much as you invested. M&G does not offer investment advice. M&G Unit Trusts are authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority. M&G Financial Services Limited (Regulated by the Financial Services Authority). Registered Office: M&G House, Victoria Road, Chelmsford CM1 1FB. M&G Unit Trusts are managed by M&G Securities Limited (Regulated by the FSA and the Financial Services Authority).

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3 Motoring10-11 Property
12 Hot spot: Kennington13
14

PERSONAL FINANCE

'Revolutionary' pension alert



NIC CICUTTI

The Treasury's new tax-free pension wrapper is a sensible move, but hardly new

ARE WE at the threshold of yet another "pensions revolution"? I ask because some commentators have suggested that this week's Treasury proposals for a new "pooled investment vehicle" involves precisely that.

Maybe I'm missing something here, but it doesn't seem like it to me.

What the Government seems to be proposing is that unit and investment trust companies, who have found it difficult to package products under a pension wrapper, will be able to do so more easily from now on.

A new tax-free wrapper, offering the same benefits as a traditional personal pension, will be applicable to occupational schemes, the proposed stakeholder pensions, even personal pensions. The quid pro quo for companies planning to use this wrapper is that their products must be cheap, with low level charges and low or no entry and exit charges.

It is easy to foresee the effect of such changes. Life insurance companies have been kicked in the teeth. Their own products have been judged to be inflexible and far too expensive for investors. To that extent, what the Government has done is a sensible move. But it is debatable whether it really is as new as all that.

Unit and investment trust firms have always offered their products in pension form. However, independent advisers have tended not to recommend them, largely because of the low upfront commission they paid. Many companies have also offered "recurring single premium contributions", where you can pay regular monthly premiums - but without heavy charges. Again, most advisers "forget" to tell their clients about this option, for the same reason as before.

Will this change now that unit and investment trusts can be marketed more

easily? To the extent that many advisers' clients are taking on board what this newspaper has argued for years, namely that charges are a critical aspect of any pension, it will have some effect, though not quickly.

The Treasury's liberalisation of its pensions wrappers is also positive: some will benefit from the wider investment choice. This, however, brings other problems. Is it sensible for savers to take out unit trust-style pensions investing in, for example, Latin America?

Proper advice is critical. Yet Ministers appear to be piling their hopes on product "transparency" as a way of ensuring they are properly sold. Big mistake: I can see another pensions scandal looming here.

Another question mark hangs over the extent of this flexibility. This new vehicle is intended to enable people to move from employer to employer with it.

Assuming employers will allow you to do that. And that they will pay the same contribution into your pension vehicle as their own. There's no sign that they will be forced to.

While useful, these proposals don't constitute a revolution. We're still waiting for New Labour to deliver on that one and I, for one, am not holding my breath.

Peter is divorced and has a 17-year-old son who lives with his mother nearby. His income is variable but averages approximately £50,000 per annum.

His home has no outstanding mortgage. Peter has managed to save and build up capital in various building-society accounts. The majority is held in the Cheltenham and Gloucester Instant Transfer Account, which pays a competitive interest rate with instant access.

Some of the remaining accounts were opened to benefit from carpetbagging. In addition to this, Peter has a Tessa with Birmingham Midshires; this account has been earmarked for a future project.

He also has £2,500 invested in National Savings Premium bonds, but returns have been disappointing.

His only investment in equities is 17 shares in Eurotunnel, his reason being that he was born in Folkestone.

In the past, Peter's experience in investment has been disastrous. In 1983 he bought 14 Krugerrands at about £250 each, and eventually sold them 10 years later for about the same price. In August 1988 he purchased a share in a flat for £15,000 and subsequently sold it in August 1991 for £20,000, a loss of £5,000.

Peter wants to improve on the returns he is currently receiving from his building society, and to maximise his future retirement income.

The adviser
Bryan Bull is an associate director with the Aitchison and Colegrave Group, independent financial advisers, Suite One, Berkeley House, 15 Hay Hill, Mayfair, London W1X 7LG (0171-499 0590).

The advice
Peter opened a regular contribution personal pension contract in 1984 with Sun Alliance, now Royal and Sun Alliance, investing in the traditional with-profits fund. In 1987 he invested a single contribution of £2,000. These contracts are the old-style "retirement annuity contracts" and have a guaranteed fund value at normal retirement age of 65 and also a guaranteed annuity rate.

With current annuity rates at an all-time low and interest rates look-

ing as though they will fall further, this is a valuable option.

The existing pension contract should be maintained at its current funding level (£450 per month) in order to take advantage of the valuable guaranteed future fund values and the guaranteed annuity rates (£10,539 per annum per £1,000).

Additional single premiums should be made annually to take advantage of personal pension legislation allowing higher contributions to be made. At Peter's age, 48, up to 25 per cent of net relevant earnings can be paid in, as opposed to 17.5 per cent under his existing retirement annuity contracts. This will offer Peter the opportunity to diversify his investment and offer greater flexibility in the future.

I recommend a single contribution of £7,000 gross to the Scottish Equitable Personal Pension contract selecting the Global fund, which invests in a wide range of world-wide equities, predominately in the UK and Europe. As Peter is a higher-rate taxpayer this will reduce his tax bill by £2,800. He could also utilise carry back/carry forward provisions for underpaid contributions in previous years, further cutting his tax bill.

Peter's Tessa was set up three years ago with Birmingham Midshires Building Society, making maximum contributions, and these should be maintained until maturity.

With regard to Peter's building society deposits, many should be maintained in order not to prejudice any potential windfalls. However, interest rates continue to fall, and we have already seen bank base rates fall from 7.25 per cent to 6 per cent per annum over the course of the last few months. Accounts with societies that are not likely to demutualise should be closed and the proceeds reinvested.

Peter has indicated that he would be prepared to invest a proportion of his capital into asset-backed investments adopting a balanced attitude to risk. He is also interested in an exposure to Europe.

As Peter has no other equity investments (apart from Eurotunnel), my recommendation would be to invest £10,000 into a unit trust personal equity plan with Jupiter. The money should be split equally, placing £5,000 in the Income fund and a further

FINANCIAL MAKEOVER

NAME: PETER LORD AGE: 48 OCCUPATION: SELF-EMPLOYED COMPUTER CONSULTANT



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£3,000 in the European fund.

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within the top quarter of funds in its sector. The European fund invests in a wide range of equities from the European community, and has also managed to achieve consistent first-quartile ranking.

As personal equity plans will be replaced by Individual Savings Plans (ISAs) on 6 April 1999, Peter should consider a further investment of up to £7,000 in three months' time, to achieve greater diversification.

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Always count the costs

Don't just look at returns on your investment, check the costs, too - you could be shocked



JONATHAN DAVIS

The longer you hold your fund, the bigger impact costs can make

Like many investors, it has taken me longer than it should have done to arrive at the realisation that costs are such a major ingredient of long-term investment performance.

Particularly with shares, it is easy to spend too much time looking at the return side of the equation and not enough at the cost element. Whether you are investing directly yourself, or through a fund, the message is the same. Costs can seriously damage your wealth.

Of course in a bull market, like the one we have enjoyed for many years now, many investors have been able to ignore costs because the overall performance of their investments has been so good. If you are making 15 per cent a year tax-free through a PEP, why bother whether you are paying 1 per cent, 2 per cent or 3 per cent to the company which is looking after your money? Many fund managers have grown fat on the back of their investors' seeming indifference to costs.

Now that inflation and interest rates have fallen so sharply, however, nominal returns from all types of investment must come down too. With inflation at, say, 2 per cent, and a long term real return on equities of around 6-7 per cent, even if you are still a long term bull of the equity mar-



Careful calculations are needed to work out the best deals

ket, only the foolish will count on shares producing long term returns much above 9 per cent in nominal terms.

With that kind of return, it obviously starts to make a lot more difference whether the cost of your equity unit trust, for example, is 1 per cent or 3 per cent per annum. There is no point in giving back a third of your potential annual return unless you are absolutely convinced that your fund manager can make up the difference in superior performance. In practice, a 3 per cent a year cost burden is an awful handicap for even a brilliant equity fund manager to make up - and 2 per cent a year is almost as stiff a hurdle to overcome.

But how do you find out what the cost of your managed funds are? The answer is: you can't. Fund managers will happily tell you what their annual management fee for running the fund is. But that figure is not the end of the story. There are a whole range of other costs

(such as audit, custody, and administration costs) which the fund management company will deduct from any money you invest with them.

These costs can be highly significant, and can add anything from 10 per cent to 50 per cent to the annual cost of your fund. In the United States, total expense ratios (or TERs) for mutual funds are widely collected and publicised. But in this country, the amazing thing is that, although the unit trust business is now more than 80 years old, as far as is known nobody has ever thought it worthwhile to collect and analyse total expense ratios.

Now at last, someone is trying to provide commercially what you would have thought would already be an essential service to investors. A consultancy firm called Fitzrovia International, which has been compiling TERs for offshore funds for the last five years, has recently published the first edition of what it hopes will be regu-

THE COST OF LOOKING AFTER YOUR MONEY					
	Length of Investment (years)				
	5	10	15	20	25
Total invested	30,000	60,000	90,000	120,000	150,000
Accumulated Value of Fund, £	38,121	94,371	177,356	299,770	480,333
Value 'At Risk' through higher fees, £	1,271	6,002	16,969	38,723	18,603
As % of Fund Value	3.34	6.36	9.57	12.92	16.36
As % of Amount Invested	4.24	10.00	18.85	32.27	52.4

Source: Independent/Fitzrovia International Limited

ular quarterly surveys of TERs for UK-based funds. While the table is aimed at professionals, and priced above the average investor, the firm hopes to publish a retail version in due course, which will be welcome.

Having seen the first report in the series, I can say that it makes very interesting reading. Some of the findings are as you would expect: index funds are generally cheaper than actively-managed funds (by nearly 0.5 per cent per annum on average). Funds that invest over-

seas are generally more expensive those which confine their investment to the UK.

But what emerges very clearly from the consultants' detective work is the huge difference there is between the costs charged by different providers, much of which appears to be unjustified by performance. For UK equity funds, for example, even eliminating one or two obvious non-profit outliers, TERs range from 0.45 per cent per annum to 3.67 per cent per annum. In fact, quite a large

number of well-known fund managers are routinely charging their clients more than twice the average fees of their competitors.

This disparity may be only a reflection of a fund manager's exceptional record or marketing skill. There is no law which says that the most successful fund managers (such as Jupiter and Perpetual) should not be allowed to profit from their skill in having compiled a good track record.

But, as usual in these cases, it is the many indifferent fund managers in the middle of the pack who seem to be getting away with more than they should if the market were genuinely competitive, and consumers more aware of the costs they are paying. Banks and insurance companies generally come out worse than specialist fund managers.

The key message is that the longer you intend to hold your fund, the bigger an impact costs make to its performance. The table above, for example, shows the difference it can make if you put £5,000 a year into a UK tax-free equity fund with a low TER (0.65 per cent) compared to one with one of the highest (2 per cent plus). Assume a 9 per cent growth rate (see above), run the numbers and what you find is really quite frightening.

Over 10 years, the burden of these additional costs will cut the value of your fund by £5,000, assuming identical performance in all other respects.

That equates to 6 per cent of your fund and 10 per cent of the total amount you have invested at that point. Over 25 years, the amount you will have "lost" through higher charges is £65,000 - the burden of extra costs has eaten up £1 of every £5 your fund by then should be worth, and over half your total investment has gone in paying these costs!

If the high-cost fund were a racehorse, nobody would think of racing it with such a handicap in place - but then this is fund management where different rules seem to apply.

LOOSE CHANGE

THE NORWICH & Peterborough Building Society is launching a new savings account, Share Saver 3, which offers a choice of tiered interest rates which can be variable or fixed. Variable rates range from 4.25 per cent gross on deposits up to £2,499 to 6.25 per cent gross on sums above £100,000. Fixed rates start at 4 per cent gross rising to 5.5 per cent on deposits above £100,000. Accounts are limited to certain residential areas. Call 01733 372372 for details.

WEST BROMWICH Building Society is launching RAPID, a fast-track mortgage service which it claims can give a firm offer within five days on the society's entire home loan range. Applicants need a P60 and their latest pay slip, mortgage statement (where possible) and bank statement. Call 0121 6073442 for details.

FIDELITY INVESTMENTS is launching a free Guide to Income following research showing that a third of savers are worried about the effect of falling interest rates on the income they receive from their money. The company has also launched a new high-yield corporate bond PEP with a projected annual yield of 7.5 per cent. Call 0800 414171.

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INTERNET INVESTOR
ROBIN AMLÖT

LEGEND HAS it that one wealthy Wall Street trader realised that it was time to get out of shares and into cash ahead of the crash of 1929 when his shoe-shine boy started offering him share tips.

Now I have never been one to weave any kind of mystique around the stockmarket. Indeed, most of those working at the cutting edge of the Square Mile are little more than exceedingly well-paid bookies' runners.

But - and it is an exceedingly large but - when the central banker of the world's largest economy, the head of the world's largest media empire, and the boss of the world's biggest software firm, Alan Greenspan, Rupert Murdoch and Bill Gates respectively, all start singing from the same hymn book, we should pay attention.

You are probably aware that what they have all been saying is

that prices of Internet stocks are defying gravity but have little chance of continuing to do so.

They are, in a word, overvalued. Leaving aside all the hype, who is actually responsible for the way the share price of the likes of bookseller Amazon.com has behaved? Mostly, it is a phenomenon caused by so-called "day traders" in the US. These "day traders" are not Wall Street whiz kids - they are ordinary punters but with a difference.

You or I may invest in the stockmarket for the medium or long term. To these people, long term means a day. They may trade in and out of Internet stocks several times in a day thanks to their immediate access to the market as a result of the development of direct electronic trading through the Internet brokerages such as E-trade and Charles Schwab.

All you need to remember is that all Internet stocks come with a serious wealth warning. Trading to take advantage of the potential capital gains in a share price always ends in tragedy. The last bubble market like this occurred in shares in Japan in the 1980s, where the stockmarket is currently around a third of the level at which it peaked. The Japanese government has now resorted to handing out free shopping coupons in a bid to boost the economy. Buying and selling your shares via the Internet is not an excuse to check your commonsense at the door on the way in.

In fact, on the way in is the best place for a reality check. If you surf the Net through a basic ISP, then why not have one of the personal finance sites such as Moneyworld as your home page? Alternatively, if your entry point is a more complex portal such as AOL, check out the personal finance content on its pages. Now, Freeserve, Dixons new ISP, has announced plans to launch a personal finance channel. It aims to provide personal investment information, allowing you to check the value of your shares and unit trusts and look up background information on companies in which you are considering investing.

Dixons intends to expand service in the summer to include on-line share dealing while the Freeserve finance channel will contain investment information provided by the US group MicroCap Financial Services. Since launching in September, Freeserve has attracted a million subscribers of which, Dixons says, 827,000 are active users. Robin can be reached at RobinAmlot@aol.com

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LOOSE CHANGE

HOLDEN MEERAN, the independent financial advice firm, has published a new and substantially updated edition of its guide to green and ethical investments. The 40-page guide comments on the latest development in the market, including "dark", "medium" and "light" green investments, ethical banking plus key questions for potential investors to consider and offers a self-diagnostic profile section at the end. Free copies are available by calling 0800 7314505.

NORTWICH UNION is cutting the initial charge on its European Equity Fund PEP from 5 per cent to 3 per cent, until Monday 6 April. Contact an independent financial adviser for more details.

FIRST ACTIVE, the telephone-based mortgage lender and savings account provider, is launching a new mortgage package which combines a home loan with a personal one. The offer allows borrowers to use the money for non-mortgage repayment purposes. Loans are secured against the property. Rates start at 6.49 per cent and are guaranteed to remain at 0.5 per cent below Northern Rock's standard variable rate for the duration of the loan period. Call 0845 6006050 for details.

FIRST MORTGAGE, the telephone-based home loan company, is launching its cheapest ever three-year fixed rate mortgage, pegged at 3.99 per cent until 31 March 2002. The loan requires a £35 application fee and is available on loans-to-value up to 90 per cent. There are no compulsory insurances. Call 0800 080088 for more details.

SUN BANK, the banking arm of Sun Life of Canada, the insurers, is guaranteeing the rates on its variable Tessa until 5 April. Variable rate Tessa currently pay 6.75 per cent. Call 01438 744656. More details are available from any independent financial adviser.

WITH INTEREST rates coming down fast, it is sometimes more expensive to take out a shorter-term fix in case one is left with a higher rate by the end of the fixed-term period. Manchester Building

SG ASSET Management is launching a PEP - qualifying UK Income unit trust, with a yield marginally above those available in equity markets. It aims to boost income by improving growth. Initial charges are 5.25 per cent, with annual management fees of 1.5 per cent, taken from capital. Call 0800 1007426.

A - Minimum age 22 years. Holders of comprehensive motor insurance policy or lender's existing customers

APR - Annualised percentage rate

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B+C - Buildings and contents insurance

H - Higher rate applies if insurance not arranged

IVY - Loan to value

MP - Mortgage interest premium

N - Index-linked unit trust

S - Withdrawal via Bank Cheque System

F - Fixed rate (all other rates variable)

M - Net rate

P - By post only

All rates are shown gross and are subject to change without notice.

Source: MONEYFACTS 01603 474675

* If compilation is below 30,458

All rates subject to change without notice.

Source: MONEYFACTS 01603 474675

BEST MORTGAGES

	Telephone number	% Rate and period	Max £IV %	Fee	Repayment	Penalty
MORTGAGES						
Broads BS	0161 224000	4.99% for 7 years	85%	£205		From 1 year. Adv up to 50% no MP
Wessex BS	0161 244000	5.19% to 21.02	85%	£245		Advances up to 85% no MP
West Bromwich BS	022 300000	5.29% to 20.49	85%	£215		Free ASU for 1 year
PEER BANKS						
Mersey Fish	0161 220000	3.49% for 4.07	85%	£225		Free ASU for 6 months. Adv up to 95% no MP
Scunthorpe BS	0161 333100	4.25% for 3 years	85%	£225		Fee of £225 refunded
Nottingham BS	01723 225200	4.25% for 4 years	85%	£225		
CAPPED RATES						
London BS	0161 222221	4.95% to 12.07	85%	£225		
St Albans BS	01603 220000	4.95% for 3 years	85%	£225		From 1 year & Adv up to 85% no MP
Scarborough BS	01603 332140	5.05% for 4 years	85%	£225		From 1 year & Adv up to 85% no MP
FIRST TIME BUYERS (Variable rates shown)						
Croydon BS	0161 220000	3.95% to 31.01	85%	£225		For advances up to 50% no MP
Hilsea & Laleham	0161 320000	4.75% for 2 years	85%	£225		For advances up to 50% no MP
Oldbury BS	01384 220000	5.05% for 5 years	85%	£225		£250 rebate, 6 months interest
VARIED DISCOUNTED RATES						
Portsmouth Rock	0161 220000	3.75% to 14.01	85%	£225		1st year 3.75% of advance
Scarborough BS	01603 220000	4.75% for 3 years	85%	£225		1st 5 years 5% of sum repaid
Nottingham BS	01603 332140	5.45% for 5 years	85%	£225		1st 4 yrs 5% of sum repaid
BEST BORROWING RATES						
PERSONAL LOANS						
UNSCORED	Telephone number	APR %	Fixed monthly payment over 3 yrs			
Northern Rock	0161 224102	5.25% F	£122.57	£144		For 2 years - 500 days interest
Phone 4 Lines	01603 320000	5.15%	£161.40	£161.41		Up to 31.02. 5% of 5% of balance
Direct Line	0161 320000	5.25%	£162.54	£162.52		Up to 5 years 5% of sum repaid
OVERDRAFTS						
	Telephone	Account	Interest	Overdrawn		
Ally & Lister	020 856555	Alloy	0.05%	12.05% 2.25%	20.05	1st 6 years - 500 days interest
Halifax BS	01603 220210	Revolv	0.05%	12.05% 2.15%	20.05	1st 5 years 5% of sum repaid
Abbey National	01603 227774	Bank	1.05%	13.05% 2.25%	31.15	1st 4 yrs 5% of sum repaid
CREDIT CARDS						
	Telephone	Card Type	Rate	APR	Annual	Interest
Co-operative Bank	0800 100000	Adv Cash	0.05%	5.50%	0	0 days
Positive Bank/Capital One 01603 551000	Mastercard	0.50%	5.50%	0	0	0 days
HSBC Awards	0800 077770	Visa	0.50%	5.50%	0	0 days
GOLD CARDS						
Co-operative Bank	0800 100000	Adv Gold Visa	0.05%	5.50%	0	0 days
Co-operative Bank	104 2121212	Barclaycard	0.05%	10.05%	£120	45 days
STORE CARDS						
	Telephone	Payment by direct debit	Payment by other methods			
John Lewis	Visa	1.05%	10.05%	1.05%	10.05%	
Marks & Spencer	0161 651681	1.05%	25.75%	1.05%	25.75%	
Waitrose	Visa	1.05%	26.05%	2.15%	26.05%	
FIRST TESSAS						
Lynton BS	0161 171777					5 Year 23.000 7.40% Year
Loughborough BS	01603 225221					5 Year 23.000 7.20% Year
Lynton & General	01603 112000					5 Year 23.000 7.10% Year
SAGA for over 50s	0800 300555					5 Year 23.000 7.00% Year
NOTICE ACCOUNTS & BONDS						
Cheltenham BS	0800 272505	POST&GO	30	Day (P)	£5,000	8.25% Year
Scarborough BS	01773 500015	45 Day Access	45	Day (P)	£5,000	8.00% Year
Standard Life	0845 5555557	50 Day Access	50	Day (T)	£1	8.00% Year
AEA	0800 333332	RateSafe	50	Day (D)	£2,500	8.00% Month
CHEQUE ACCOUNTS						
Star Bank	01482 744505	HCA				None 21.000 4.75% Year
AMC Bank	0161 4472040	HCA				Interest 25.000 5.75% Day
Leeds & Halifax BS	0171 657150	Alison Cheque				Interest 25.000 5.75% Day
Chase & Coop	01603 429400	Classic Postie				Interest 21.000 4.50% Year

The name is bond - corporate bond

PLUMMETING INTEREST rates put a smile on the face of anyone with a variable rate mortgage. But if you want an income from your investments, the news could not be worse. Returns on building society and bank deposits are shrinking, with rates on many long-term investments faring no better.

"The fact is that yields are falling on everything, whether it's postal accounts or gilts," says Andrew Jones of independent financial advisers The David Aaron Partnership.

Corporate bonds are basically IOUs issued by companies. People who buy corporate bonds are lending to a business which pays them a fixed rate of interest, and usually promises to repay the capital back on a fixed date. They are like gilts, or UK Government bonds, but carry more risk, because the government is considered more creditworthy than most companies. So corpo-

High-yield corporate bonds could be a way to beat falling interest rates. By Rachel Fixsen

rate bonds pay more interest than deposits, gilts or other more solid fixed-rate investments.

Once issued, the capital value of any bond fluctuates, depending on the financial health of the issuer and prevailing interest rates. This gives funds holding the bonds some scope for capital growth.

Corporate bond funds take the form of either unit trusts or open-ended investment companies (OEICs). Like equity-based funds, they can be held tax-free in Personal Equity Plans (PEPs). But from this April, corporate bond funds will have an advantage over share funds.

The 20 per cent tax credit which PEP investors can reclaim on their share dividends will be cut to 10 per cent after 5 April, and disappear altogether five years later. But cor-

porate bonds will not be affected as an income is paid as interest rather than dividends.

"A lot of big players in the corporate bond market have focused on high-yield bond funds - that is a relatively new feature of the corporate bond fund market," says Jason Hollands of brokers Best Investment.

"We are seeing more demand for income, and investors have been cautious about equities because of the volatility," he says.

Fund managers Perpetual, Schroders and Fidelity have all recently launched higher yielding corporate bond funds in the retail market, following the success story of M&G. M&G started its high-yield corporate bond fund last September, marketing it alongside its existing corporate bond fund. The high-yield

PEP has a redemption yield of 7.8 per cent, compared with 5 per cent for its other corporate bond PEP.

In order to achieve that, M&G holds most of the fund's assets in what are known as sub-investment

Investing in a fund that holds corporate bonds is less risky

grade bonds - infamously known in the Eighties as junk bonds.

Ratings agency Standard & Poor's assesses the creditworthiness of a whole host of bond issuers. The ratings go from AAA+, for the most financially solid concern, right down

to D for default. A bond from an issuer with a rating above BBB- is considered investment grade, but below that, sub-investment grade.

"This is where the incidence or likelihood of default increases markedly," says Tony Assender of S&P. A number of well-established companies issue sub-investment grade bonds, including IPC Magazines, Orange Telecom and BSkyB.

Investing in sub-investment grade bonds individually would be very risky, but investing in a fund holding them is much less so. The risk is spread, and fund managers believe the effectiveness of their research cuts the risk still further.

But the corporate bond market in the UK is still very small compared to the equities market, and this could limit the scope for funds.

M&G says it is glad it got in early in the high-yield end of the market.

"We were able to pick up some real bargains, and we have a portfolio that not everyone will be able to get," says Tessa Murray of M&G.

For example, the fund invested early on in bonds issued by betting shop business William Hill, which has subsequently floated on the stock market.

Andrew Jones describes corporate bond funds as the first step away from deposits in terms of risk. But that risk should not be ignored, particularly with high-yield funds.

Because of the increased risk, M&G says its high-yield fund should not be seen simply as a corporate bond fund with a high yield. "We look at it as we would an equity fund," says Ms Murray. Investors should

see it as a total return fund rather than an income-producing fund.

Andrew Jones and Jason Hollands recommend Fidelity in the high-risk corporate bond fund market, because of its vast investment research resources - important when assessing the prospects for sub-investment grade bonds.

Of the mainstream corporate bond funds, Mr Jones suggests Aberdeen Prolific and the well-established CGU Monthly Income Plus. Mr Hollands prefers Legal & General for its low charging structure.

Best Investment Brokers, 0171 321 0100; The David Aaron Partnership, 01903 281544 (corporate bond PEP guide, available £2 to cover p&p); M&G, 0800 399 399 (M&G offers a guide to fixed interest investment); Aberdeen Prolific, 0345 585666; Legal & General, 0500 116622; CGU, 0845 6072439

When you have to change with the times

As retirement looms, investment needs change. By Abigail Montrose

FOUR YEARS ago, Jean Hind decided to go part time in the run-up to her retirement. She now works three days a week at her local library and plans to retire fully next year. Jean's lifetime habit of saving has made it possible for her to look forward to a comfortable retirement.

"I realised four years ago that I had built up a good enough pension and investment portfolio to enable me to cut down on my hours at work," she says. "My pension will be sufficient to cover everyday expenses, but it is the income from my investments that will pay for luxuries such as holidays abroad and my golf club membership."

In order to be in this position, Jean's investment strategy needed to change. Over the years she had saved money in a building society and invested for growth in unit trust funds and investment trust shares.

However, she needed to look at investments which would offer her a good income in retirement, says her independent financial adviser Rory Thomson, a director of James & George Collie in Aberdeen.

"Jean had a diverse portfolio, but we decided to reduce the risk and transfer into income-producing funds. We have moved away from equity investments into low-risk corporate bond income PEPs and low-risk h-profits bonds. As Jean is still working part-time we have not needed to take income from these investments, but when she retires we will," he explains.

The bulk of Jean's investment portfolio had been in growth unit trusts: Perpetual UK Growth, Schroders UK Enterprise and Schroders European. Jean had used her PEP allowance in the past, so Rory could not simply transfer the cash from one PEP fund into another.

Instead, he has sold units in the trusts each year and invested this money in corporate bond PEPs. In the last four years, an has transferred £12,000 into the CU monthly Income PEP and £12,000 into the M&G Corporate Bond PEP. These funds offer an annual yield of 6 to 6.5 per cent.

The rest of the money from the original



When you stop earning a wage, you'll have to rely on investment income

"The original growth investments produced next to no income because all the earnings were reinvested. In the last four years we have reduced the risk and moved over to investments that provide tax-free income of about 6 per cent, and there is the potential for capital growth," says Rory.

On top of this, Jean still has £8,000 in a building-society account and a fully funded

Tessa. She has also kept her investment trust shares, which should provide some growth; she hopes to move these into an individual savings account after April.

Jean is lucky enough to be able to switch to low-risk investments to provide her with enough money to supplement her income. But those requiring less income or greater capital growth than she is likely to achieve may want to stick to equity funds.

The first thing to do when moving from growth funds into income funds is to work out exactly how much income you need.

The more income you need, the less opportunity there is for capital growth.

A unit trust fund in the UK equity

growth sector will yield 1 to 3 per cent a year, but there is potential for capital growth - whereas a fund in the UK equity income unit trust sector will yield 3 to 5 per cent.

If it turns out that this is what you have been doing, all you need to do is start drawing out the income from the fund rather than reinvesting that income for growth.

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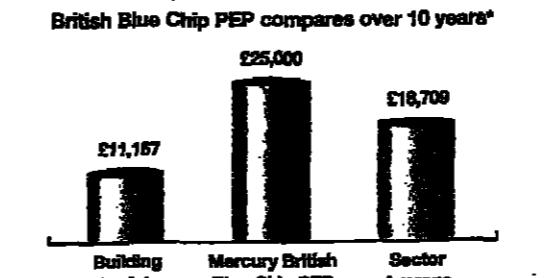
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Don't be dazzled by the gold rush

Corporate bonds aren't the answer for everyone - especially if you want long-term capital growth. By Tony Lyons

Investors rushing to buy corporate bonds, whether in a personal equity plan or not, could be making a big mistake. While they certainly offer a high and reasonably risk-free level of income distribution, the prospects are that this will be unlikely to progressively rise over time. Nor is the investment likely to show much in the way of capital growth.

"If you want to maximise your income, then choose corporate bonds," says Jason Hollands of BEST Investment, "but if you want a mixture of a rising income and capital growth, then there is still a strong case for buying income funds that invest in good quality equities."

The yield from low-risk corporate bond funds is now around 6 to 8 per cent. But it is important to realise that the investment is in a fixed-interest fund that usually has a portfolio of various types of corporate loans and, maybe, some

government gilt-edged stock. While these loans are traded, their value is usually determined by the quality of the company that issues them and the fixed income they distribute.

If a company issues loan stock that it will repay in full in 2025 with a coupon of 7 per cent, then it will continue to pay holders £7 for every £100 they invest until the date the loan is paid back. So the prospects of any capital growth is minimal even if the loan stock can be traded.

This is unlike equities, where the value of a company's shares depends on a number of factors, the most important being its future prospects. The better a company's profits, the more it is likely to pay shareholders an income in the form of dividends. The better its prospects, the more the demand for its shares, and the higher they will rise.

"Our aim is a growing income stream," says Colin Morton, fund manager of the BWD Rensburg Equity Income Trust, one of the best



Don't let fund managers pull the wool over your eyes

performers in its sector. "We participate directly in the success of the British economy, and if we invest successfully, as we have, then income for investors will grow."

You will not immediately get a high return from an income fund. Today, these are yielding in the main between 3.5 and 5 per cent, before tax. If they are in a PEP wrapper, the income will be tax-free but only until 5 April, the end of this financial year. This is thanks to last year's Budget.

Up until now, PEP managers could reclaim the advanced corporation tax, the tax a company pays on the dividends it distributes, on behalf of their investors. After 5 April, and for the next five years, they will only be able to reclaim half. After April 2004, they will not be able to reclaim any ACT.

This means that if you received £125 in dividends from your PEP of which £25 was reclaimed ACT, and assuming no increase in the cash

pay-out, the amount will drop to £111 in the coming financial year, and to £100 after 2004. Corporate bonds, however, will still pay out tax-free income for as long as they do not invest in shares.

But of course, income fund managers are looking for growth in both dividends and capital. "We invest between 70 and 80 per cent of the fund in blue-chip stocks such as Glaxo, BP and BT, all of which are in the FTSE 100 index," says Colin Morton. "These have the stated aim of increasing dividends paid out to shareholders. As well as being extremely well managed, they are extremely liquid, which means that we can always trade in them."

The income fund managers hope to increase the income paid to investors by more than the rate of inflation. This is unlike the income from a corporate bond which is fixed, and will therefore be reduced in value by the rate of inflation.

If you need to supplement your income from a fund, then assuming

that they have grown in value, you can always cash in some of your units. "If you hold the units in a PEP then you won't have to pay capital-gains tax," says Kim North of Pretty Financial, a London-based independent financial adviser. "If they are held direct, then you need to have made over £6,800 in capital gains in the year before any tax is payable." Less than 7,000 investors in the London area paid any capital-gains tax last year.

If you can afford to take a lower income, with the prospects of it rising in the future and of capital gains, then you should look to equity income funds," says Paul Penny of Financial Discount Direct. "You can supplement income from the growth in the value of the units, and this should outstrip the rate of inflation.

BEST Investment 0171-321 0100; BWD Rensburg 0148-460 2250; Pretty Financial 0171-377 5754; Financial Discount Direct 01420 549090

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By Tony Lyons

Whom can I trust with my hard-earned cash?

With 600 options, it can be hard to find the best investment. By Tony Lyons

IF YOU are after a high income and want to do so through a collective investment, either in a PEP or through a direct holding, there is a bewildering choice.

There are now some 600 different unit trusts, open-ended investment companies or investment trusts, whose funds range from corporate bonds, UK income growth, international high income funds and split income trusts. To take the pain out of choosing, here is what some expert independent financial advisers have to recommend.

If it's corporate bonds you are interested in, Jason Hollands of the London-based BEST Investment recommends that you look at mainstream funds. "There are a number being launched investing in sub-investment grade loan stocks," he says, "but investors who need a reliable source of income should stick with the other funds that put their money in top quality bonds."

PEPs: the last chance

You will have to move fast – but help is literally at hand

THERE ARE barely two months left before personal equity plans, or PEPs, are phased out.

After 12 years of being a mainstay of anyone seeking to shelter investments from tax, they are to be replaced on April 6 by Individual Savings Accounts, another tax-free wrapper but with slightly different rules (it will still be possible to hold a PEP, of course, but they will no longer be on sale).

So this is the last chance to take advantage of a scheme offering significant benefits to anyone happy to put their money away for five years or longer.

Before April, it is possible to shelter up to £9,000 in a PEP (£6,000 in a general PEP and £3,000 in a single-company version). Couples can put away double that amount.

There is no shortage of funds prepared to accept this money. Most are expecting floods of cash in the next few weeks. The big question for any

investor, of course, is which fund to choose. Get it right and your last PEP can deliver thousands of pounds of tax-free growth in the next decade. Get it wrong and you won't have to worry about capital gains liabilities – because your fund won't have earned enough to be subject to them.

This is why *The Independent* has produced a "Guide to Last-Minute PEPs", written by Nic Cicuti, the paper's personal finance editor. It discusses whether PEP investments might suit your needs and what the tax benefits are – and aren't – as well as answering the most common questions about PEPs: how and where to buy them, what to look out for and what to bear in mind when buying one.

If you are considering a last-minute PEP, this guide, sponsored by Scottish Widows Fund Management, is for you. Call 0345 5678910 for your free copy.

As charges are one of the main determinants of variation in performance, he advises to look at the Legal & General corporate bond that has no initial charge and an annual charge of just 0.5 per cent.

Among equity funds, he particularly likes Newton Income and BWD Equity Income. "Both give a reasonable yield and have shown good capital growth over the years."

Elsewhere in London, Kim North of Pretty Financial points potential corporate bond investors at M&G Corporate High Yield, which was the first into the market with a fund that will look at higher-yielding loan stock offered by non-blue chip companies, the so-called junk bonds.

"In the past, the team managing the fund has got a good reputation for getting its investments right," says North. "and there's no reason now to think that they will start to pick up a lot of stock in companies that will default on their loans."

Among the fixed interest funds, she likes Aberdeen Fixed Interest, currently yielding around 7 per cent. "Among equity funds," she says, "you could consider the income funds from Jupiter, Perpetual, Premier and Royal SunAlliance. My overall favourite, however, is MAG High Yield, especially if it's to be put in a tax-efficient PEP wrapper."

In Shrewsbury, Phillips Gee, of Gee & Co, picks Newton Higher Income as her choice of equity funds. "This £175m fund, which has part of its portfolio in preference shares and corporate bonds, is picked for its overall total returns, both income and growth. The group takes a collegiate view, so performance is not dependent on one fund manager. It picks out mainly blue-chip companies that will produce sustained dividend growth."

From Yorkshire, Graham Bates, of Bates Investment Services, recommends an investment in Save &

Prosper's Equity Income. Like many income funds, it concentrates on blue-chip stocks – "The right place to be in the current state of the market," he says. "It's a steady, consistent performer that currently yields around 3.6 per cent."

Ailsa Brown, of RAD Young, in Glasgow, advises a look at the £150m Henderson Preference & Bond fund, currently yielding around 6.5 per cent even if its performance has been a bit off the boil during the last 12 months". This is because preference shares have been a bit of a drag. But looking at two-year performance, the fund is sixth in the fixed-interest sector, fifth over three years, and second over five years. All this time, it has had the same fund manager, according to Brown.

When it comes to corporate bonds, she recommends CGU Monthly Income Plus, presently yielding around 6.8 per cent. "It has very low volatility, meaning that it shows a consistent performance, and while you expect it to show little growth, it has still increased by nearly 60 per cent over five years."

Also in Glasgow, David Thomson,

of Aitchison & Colegrave, Scotland's largest firm of independent financial advisers, likes Britannia High Yield.

"It has produced consistently good



A smooth line in sales patter is not the only consideration

results and has an enviable long-term record, placing it in the top 10 per cent of high income funds.

Its success is due to strong team performance, with sector specialists responsible for stock selection in their areas of expertise. This means the fund is aggressively managed, making extensive use of fixed

interest and convertible instruments, enabling it to buy some lower-yielding growth stocks and sectors."

In Bristol, Roddy Kohn, of Kohn Cougar, advises risk-averse readers to look at M&G's conventional corporate bond. "It has a tried and tested management team, who don't invest in the riskier end of the market such as preference shares, and it is consistently in the top quarter of sector performance tables."

Among equity funds, he particularly likes City of London Investment Trust, which has produced a consistently rising income as well as good capital growth in asset values, and Johnson Fry Income, another consistent performer.

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Split capital investment trusts are not for the unwary. By Abigail Montrose

Splitting images

Split capital investment trusts are not the easiest investments to understand, but if you need above average income and are worried about falling interest rates, they are worth considering.

For those who need a high income anywhere up to 12 per cent or more) and are prepared to forego capital growth, these funds can be dealt, says Doug Kennedy, director at Globe Independent Financial Advisers, in Twickenham, Middlesex.

"You can get a higher income from the income shares of a split capital investment trust than you can from an annuity or most building society accounts. But the level of income depends on the performance of the fund and the amount of capital you are prepared to sacrifice," he says.

Split capital investment trusts are just like other investment trusts except they issue more than one class of share. When they were first introduced in the Sixties they offered two classes of shares - income and capital shares. The income shareholders received all the dividends from the fund, while capital shareholders received the growth in the fund when it was wound up.

Since then, these trusts have become more sophisticated and many now issue several types of shares (see box for details).

None of the shares offer a guaranteed return and the ability of the fund to meet its objectives will depend on how well it performs. So before investing you should look closely at the fund as a whole.

If you plan to buy income shares which aim to return your capital in full when the trust is wound up, you should look at the "hurdle rate" and "cover" on the trust. Put simply, the hurdle rate tells you how much the fund has to grow each year to be able to meet its liabilities - a high or "positive" hurdle rate means the fund has to grow a lot to achieve this. The closer the fund is to its wind-up date,

the more important it is that it has a low hurdle rate as there is not much time left for the assets in the fund to grow.

The cover tells you if the value of the underlying assets in the fund is sufficient to cover the liabilities. High cover, such as two times cover, means the fund has assets worth double the amount needed to meet its liabilities.

As with all investment trusts, the shares are traded on the stock market so their price is determined by demand and supply rather than the value of the assets in the fund.

Mr Kennedy currently favours the income shares in the Guinness Flight geared income and growth fund. The yield on the fund is 9 per cent. The shares are trading at around 100p, but when the fund is wound up in 2006 you will only get back a maximum of 100p per share, and that is providing the fund grows 3 per cent in the meantime. Taking into account the 8 per cent drop in value by wind-up, the real yield is about 7.66 per cent.

He also likes the ordinary income shares in the Fleming Income and Capital investment trust. The fund has three years to run and has a hurdle rate of 1 per cent, which means for income shareholders to get back their capital the fund has to grow by 1 per cent.

Those wanting advice should speak to an independent financial adviser, or they could consider the Exeter High Income Trust. This is a unit trust which invests in a range of split capital investment trust shares and other high yielding shares. The current yield on the fund is 8.74 per cent after charges.

The fund is run by Chris Giles. "We spread your risk by investing in a range of investments, and you get a specialist choosing the best income shares for you," he says.

The Association of Investment Trust Companies (0171-431 5222) has published a free guide to split capital investment trusts



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TURN TO PAGE 13

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No more 'four-eyes' jibes – glasses are the fashion accessory everyone wants to wear. By Karen Falconer

The eyes have it: if you want to be hip, get some frames

If you want to be trendy, now is the time to be short-sighted. Glasses yes, it's cooler to be in your face than ponce about with words like face furniture, occhiali, eyewear or even "spectacles" are the latest must-have accessory.

Once banished from magazine pages, pop icons, from Robbie Williams and the Gallaghers to Annie Lennox and Scary Spice, are flaunting them; magazine shoots are full of them. Next week alone sees the UK launch of collections from Philippe Starck/Alain Mikli, Loued magazine and French Connection.

Indeed, most fashion designers have already complemented their sunglasses collections with them – Armani, Paul Smith, Dolce & Gabbana, Jill Sander, Calvin Klein, Jean-Paul Gaultier, Katherine Hamnett. You name them, almost without exception they'll be there. And soon the high street brands will surely be following them en masse. These days, glasses have moved on a long way from the associations they once had with greasy-haired, acne'd geeks.

Take the new glasses vocabulary. Out are taunts like "men don't make passes" and "specsy four-eyes"; in is a new bedroom speak of sex, love and passion. You "love" your glasses, you're "passionate" about the ones you buy, "our glasses make you look sexy".

Cleverly the marketers have moved in on the dowdy, clinical optician's world. They've opened their eyes to the fact that Britain may be a fashion leader, but it's aeons behind its European and US counterparts in the glasses department (the Italians buy six pairs of glasses for every pair sold here). And cutting-edge consumers are already lapping it up (sales of spectacles have grown 62 per cent in five

'The British have always separated the art and the design of wearing glasses, perhaps because they feel opticians are purely medicinal'

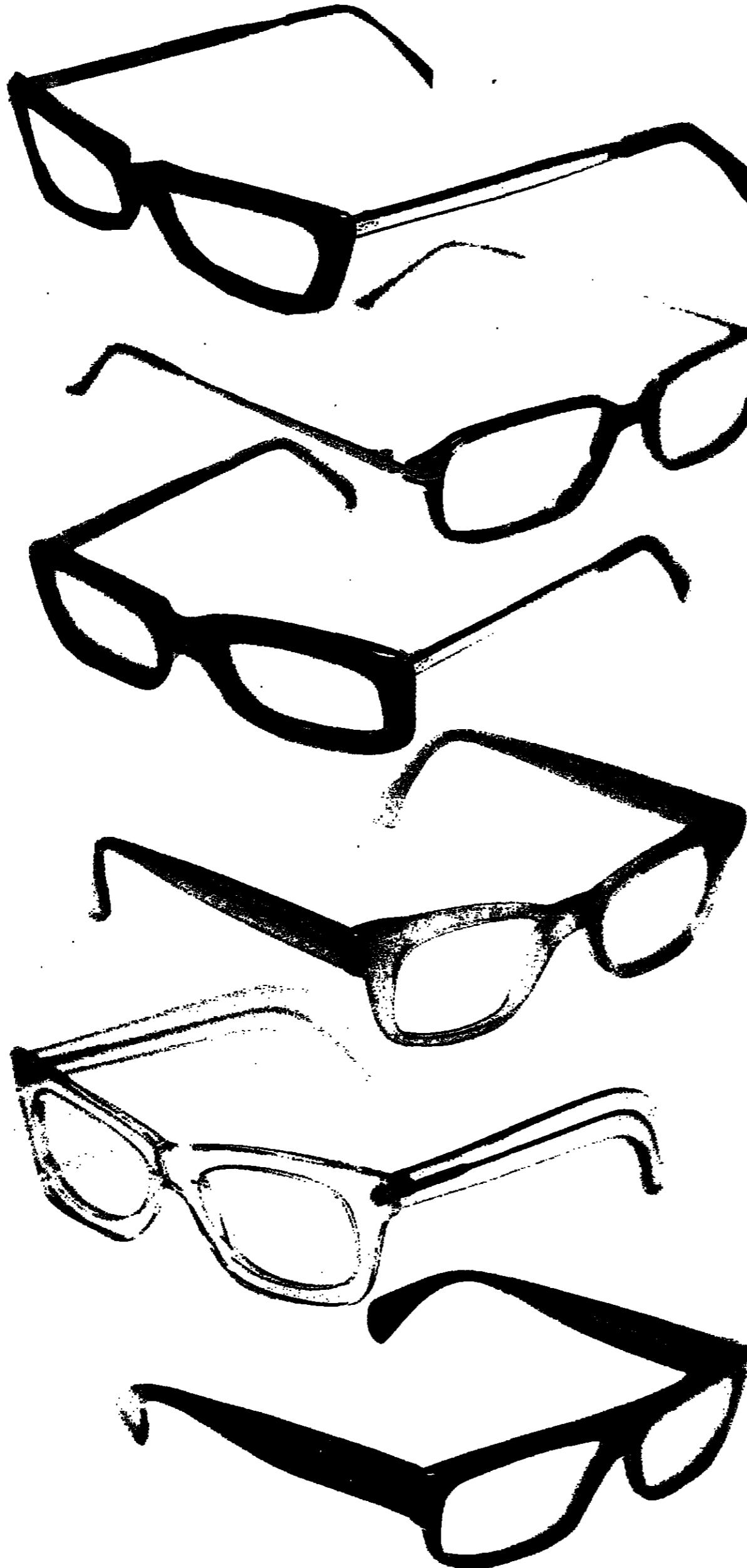
years to over £2bn annually and, as the population ages, stand to show further dramatic increases).

"It's very strange that we've been so far behind in fashion terms," says Jason Kirk of Kirk Originals, whose Covent Garden store is one of the new breed of eyewear retailers, selling themselves as style consultants rather than opticians. "For some reason the British have always separated the art and science of wearing glasses. I think it's because of the lingering feeling that opticians are purely medicinal. But now opticians are coming into the market who aren't just sitting around waiting for people to wander in like a dentist's surgery does."

Kirk, the son of a provincial optician, is keener on the artistic side: he sells glasses, has facilities to make lenses, and machines to fit the best specs to your face; but he doesn't do eye tests – you have to arrive with your prescription in hand. In fact, he sells at least one pair a week with plain glass.

He's also fervent about re-dressing the British face, and is one of the leading lights behind London's first eyewear trade exhibition (London International Optics) next weekend, which launches with around 100 top optical designers, 30 or 40 of them new to Britain. As Alain Mikli, a leading French eyewear designer and LIO exhibitor, says: "Today it's very interesting to do business in the UK because it's an open market."

Mikli, who set up in France 20 years ago, sells all round the world, but his company only started selling direct to the UK last September. Now, in addition to his own ranges, Mikli is topping the bill with his old friend, iconic furniture designer Philippe Starck. And, as well as launching the new Starck/Mikli collection, Star-



Taking it from the top – prices are for frames only: Hattie in jet, limited edition frames with original Sixties sides, £225, Kirk Originals; French Connection plastic tortoiseshell frames, from £80; Ruby in azur, £225, Kirk Originals; red, clear and black plastic frames, £109 each, Cutler & Gross

ck Eyes, in this country later in the year; he's also bringing out a collection with Issey Miyake and working with Jill Sander.

"Before, you could have nice clothes and ugly glasses and no one would say anything," he says. "Now glasses are as much a statement as the clothes. You have to play with glasses. We play with shoes, with belts, with hairstyles and we have to play with glasses too".

"Everyone else is now doing the retro look – the Fifties and Sixties – but Philippe and I are looking towards tomorrow to the third millennium. Nothing too fancy, just designed by Starck and Mikli; but very technical and practical, the minimum for the maximum."

Hard on the heels of the fashion designers comes French Connection, one of the first high-street brands to step into the glasses market. And its rationale is the same: "Eyewear is a natural extension to the lifestyle we are now selling," says Jill Read, the licensing director, about the new French Connection and lower-priced FCUK ranges.

"What people have on their face is the most visible thing they are wearing, and they are putting more and more money into high design and high quality instead of the stock frame. The whole world has been doing it, but the British are just getting into it."

The new collection comes in 40 styles including navy, deep reds and pinks, but Read adds a cautionary note: "A high percentage of people will not wear those fashion colours, so we are also stocking classics like tortoiseshell and blacks."

It's not just a question of British reserve, though. Strong colours sit less well on pale faces than on more olive-toned continental skins. According to Natalie Warren, of celebrity eyewear company Cutler & Gross (clients include Leonardo

'What people have on their face is the most visible thing they're wearing, and they are putting more money into high design and quality'

di Caprio and Elton John), this may be one reason why the Brits have been slow to take risks. "It's easier to wear strong colours if you have darker skins, so we don't experiment with colour."

Stylistically, Cutler & Gross says the mood is swinging away from the boxy, masculine look that's dominated recently towards less Fifties-style plastic (acetate) frames – and, increasingly, customers are buying a new pair of specs each season. "We're keeping the frames small and sharp, not Jackie O, because people are more likely to experiment with frames if they are small: they don't feel so conspicuous. We're selling a lot of light tints – pinks, blues, yellows. Specs to give a look."

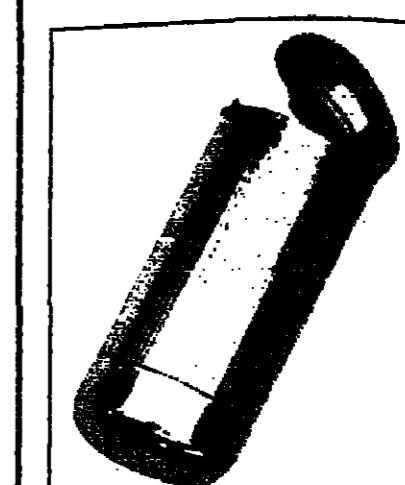
If image is all important, are contact lenses heading down a sidetrack? Not so, insists Nish Kotacha of the opticians' chain David Clulow, which has seen a 15 per cent year-on-year rise in sales of glasses. "People are combining the two," he says. "Wearing glasses for work and contact lenses for activities like sport."

The world of fashion is indeed a fickle business. Ten years ago, glasses were seen as a necessity; today they're very definitely an accessory. Yet, whatever the pundits say, what sells well depends on who wears what, and when. For now, at least, the stars' clear focus on glasses will keep them up there in the limelight.

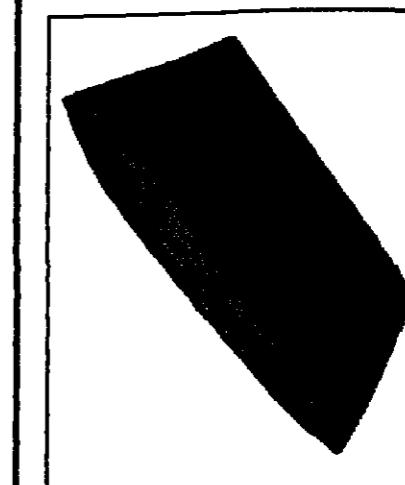
Stockists: Kirk Originals (0171-240 5055); Cutler & Gross (0171-581 2250); David Clulow (0171-486 1485); French Connection (0171-399 7200); Starck Eyes (0171-431 7316). French Connection and Starck Eyes only available from the end of March. London International Optics (0181-987 7540) is at Olympia, London, 13 to 15 February, trade only.

Red glasses bag, £15, Cutler & Gross (0171-523 8445)

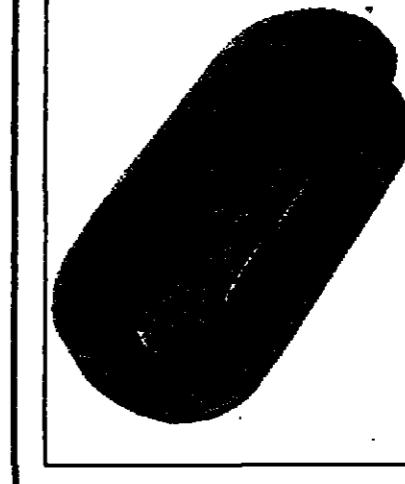
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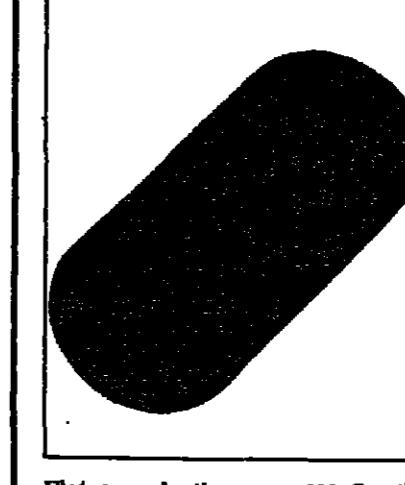
Flip-top "Authentic" case, £7.95. Optimum (01332 365 808)



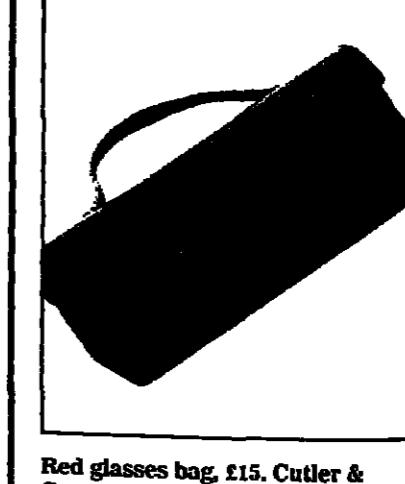
Black case, £10. Cutler & Gross (0171-523 8445)



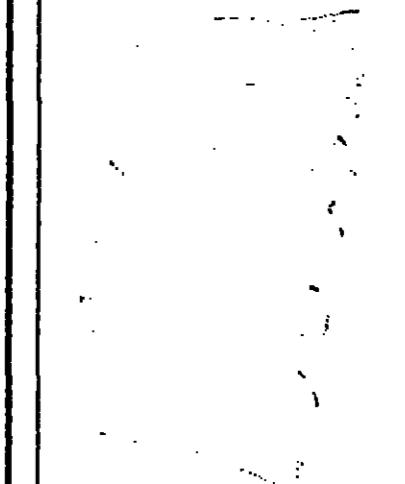
Blue Aston case, £9.95. The Conran Shop (0171-589 7401)



Flat green leather case, £20. Smyths (0171-629 8558)



Red glasses bag, £15. Cutler & Gross (0171-523 8445)



Inflatable sunglasses case, £9.95. The Conran Shop (0171-589 7401)

GOOD THING



If you're fed up with grey dismal days wear a pair of Hearts glasses and transform your world. The rose-tinted lenses soften the harshness of the British climate as well as cutting out those harmful UV rays. They are sold by SkyBlue Pink (01280 840689) at a special Valentine's Day price of £20.

MAD THING



The object of your affections hasn't quite noticed the love light in your eyes, but take heart. Help is at hand in the form of Heart Lights, a three-metre string of 10 heart-shaped lights which costs £14.99, from Urchin Mail Order (0800 328 1029). Guaranteed to cast a romantic glow over proceedings.

SHOPTALK

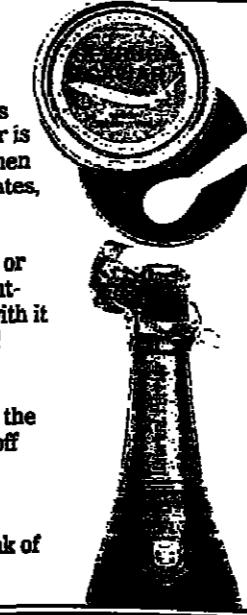
Look no further if unadulterated decadence is the way to your lover's heart and convenience is the way to yours. The leading caviar importers, W G White, has joined forces with the Laurent-Perrier champagne house to create a seductive offer for Valentine's Day.

A bottle of Laurent-Perrier Brut NV champagne, a 125g tin of fresh, chilled Iranian Sevruga caviar and a mother of pearl spoon will be delivered to your door for £55 (plus £4.50 for delivery). A saving of £35 on the usual price. All you need to do is call 07000 228 427, and allow 48 hours for delivery.

William George White set up his company in 1885 to bring the very

best caviar to the UK. Little has changed over the years – caviar is still packed in tins at sea and then transported here in wooden crates, chilled but never frozen.

Caviar is traditionally accompanied by ice-cold vodka or chilled champagne, and Laurent-Perrier's light, dry style goes with it particularly well. Caviar should always be scooped from the tin vertically from top to bottom to avoid crushing the eggs, hence the spoon provided. You can eat it off the back of your hand at the junction of the thumb and forefinger, but that's just one suggestion. No doubt you'll think of many more.



I WANT TO OWN ...
POCKETABLE GADGETS

You can take it with you, after all

Not too long ago, blue denim jeans were the epitome of masculinity. The art was squeezing into a pair two inches too small around the waist, after which retrieving a wallet, let alone loose change was near impossible. But what did that matter? Wasn't the whole point of them that we were just about to dig a ditch, or lasso some cows or something?

Now, of course, most of us have wised up and are walking round town in designer Desert Storm wear - combat trousers with enough pockets to hold Iraq's war machine. But what have we got in those huge, stitched-on, ripcord cotton handbags (substitutes that have a nasty habit of getting snagged on door handles? Absolutely nothing.

So, for every self-respecting pre-millennium, gadget-fixated psychopath, here's the checklist of all the things you should slip into your cargo pants before leaving the house each morning:

PACKET OF TUNES

Name: Rio MP3 Player
Price: £199
Stockist: 01189 444 477

Description: It fits in the palm of your hand, has simple buttons and promises jog-free portable music. The MP3 player marks the end of software as you know it thence the somewhat hazy legality of their use). This music system has no moving parts, just a 32MB memory which stores around 30 minutes worth of music files which you've hot wired from the web using a PC. Unlike its rival, the more sharply dressed MP3Man (£300, 07050 607 780), it also has a slot for a flash memory card, meaning you needn't be restricted to the music you've installed on the machine - after all would you ever go on holiday with just one cassette?

Style: ★★★

Anything else worth considering? Okay, so you really do want a mobile phone. In the midget microwave stakes, Sony's CSM-Z1 plus GSM (£200 with connection, 0990 111 999) deserves special mention, combining minuscule size, short voice memo, calendar, clock and alarm.

KEYS ARE GOOD

Name: EFX Flashing Keyring
Price: £2.50

Stockist: 01789 450 005

Description: This looks like a miniature version of a brake light tail fin on an old Cadillac. What it is, though, is the descendant of those key fobs you whistled at when you couldn't find them amid the rubble of your bachelor pad. Only this one flashes when your mobile is ringing. Just don't clip it to your trousers.

Style: ★★★

Anything else worth considering? If music quality is your first priority rather than technological snob value, then several mini disc player/recorders outperform both.

Kenwood's blue DMC-J7R(BL) which includes



A pocketfull of wizardry, clockwise from above: Gameboy keyring, £8, Nintendo (01789 450 005); Rio MP3 Player, £199 (01189 444 477); MD-MS722H, £250, Sharp (0800 262 958); D1000, £300, Olympus (0800 072 0070); DCR-PC1, £1,399, Sony (0990 111 999); Rruvi, £550, Sony (0990 111 999)

THE COMMUTER COMMUNICATOR

Name: Alinco DJ-C5

Price: £189

Stockist: 01705 662 145

Description: They may be stopping you from trying your brain, but ear pieces are a sartorial disaster. Mobile phone users are increasingly looking like extras from *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* as they stroll down the street apparently talking loudly to nobody. Could herald the return of an out-of-date communications medium, such as CB? Legality aside (you need an amateur radio licence to live out your Big Bird/Rubber Duck fantasies), this pocket-sized, tracker walkie-talkie has it all - a sleek silver body, bright yellow buttons and a five-mile range. Now you can check in with all of your mates around the city at the same time.

Style: ★★★

Anything else worth considering? Okay, so you really do want a mobile phone. In the midget microwave stakes, Sony's CSM-Z1 plus GSM (£200 with connection, 0990 111 999) deserves special mention, combining minuscule size, short voice memo, calendar, clock and alarm.

MEMORY JOGGER

Name: Olympus D1000
Price: £300

Stockist: 0800 072 0070

Description: This simple to use, silver, slimline message recorder is the latterday equivalent of the micro cassette recorders that no self-respecting FBI agent would once have been seen without. Instead of groovy little cassette tapes, however, the D1000 records around 30 minutes of material onto 2MB flash memory cards.

versions of old games such as Donkey Kong and Super Mario (£8, 01702 200 660).

Style: ★★★★

Anything else worth considering? There are several other cheaper digital recorders, including the cartoon-voice, bubble-style Sony Voice Balloon (£50, 0990 111 999) - but the disadvantage is that it records only 10 minutes of material.

POCKET BLOCKBUSTERS

Name: Panasonic DVD-L10EB

Price: £299

Stockist: 01344 882 444

Description: It would have to be a very big pocket, but it would be worth permanently stretching the fabric to squeeze in this silver dream machine, a portable laptop-style disc

player for video CDs, audio CDs and, most importantly, digital versatile discs: CD-sized discs on which are crammed whole films plus lots of gimmicky extras such as biographies, trailers and subtitles. The quality of the small screen is breathtaking, but if you want to see the bigger picture, you can plug it into a larger screen when you get home. You need never be at the mercy of the midnight movie programme again.

Style: ★★★★

Anything else worth considering? When it makes it to the marketplace, Sony's DVD Discman (£70, 0990 111 999) promises to be marginally more compact but has no built-in screen

which means you either have to plug it into a separate monitor or high-tail it to Tokyo and buy Sony's Glasstron PLM-ASSE, bizarre shades that sit directly in front of your eyes.

VISION ON

Name: Sony Rruvi

Price: £550

Stockist: 0990 111 999

Description: It rhymes with groovy and for a good reason. This lightweight (380g), miniature digital still camera also doubles up as a camcorder and can record up to 30 minutes' worth of wedding receptions. It has a zoom and an audio facility

and runs on two AA batteries. Other than that, it is thankfully devoid of the gimmicky extras that often persuade you to buy a product that you'll rarely use. The downside is the high price of the video cartridge.

Style: ★★★★

Anything else worth considering? For those wanting to record digitally, Sony also does a more chunky, complicated camcorder, the DCR-PC1 (£1,399), which includes a handy pop-up 5cm colour screen and a Carl Zeiss lens. Francis Ford Coppola, eat your heart out.

SHAWN PHILLIPS
DEPUTY EDITOR, ZM MAGAZINE

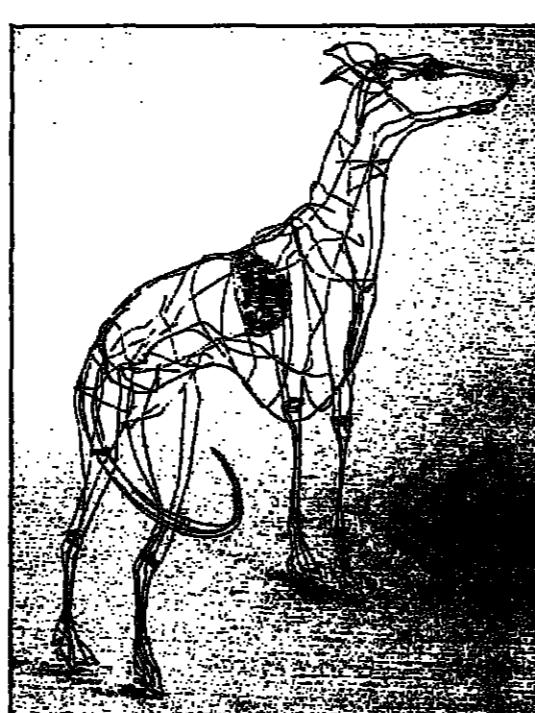
CHECK IT OUT

THE BLUECOAT CENTRE, LIVERPOOL

THE HACKNEY Contemporaries group show opens at the Bluecoat Display Centre in Liverpool on 9 February. There are probably more designer-makers per square mile in Hackney than anywhere else in Europe, and this is reflected in the diverse nature of the decorative arts that are displayed by the selected makers: furniture, glass, ceramics, metalwork and textiles.

Like the East End of London, Liverpool's docklands have been undergoing a mini-renaissance in recent years, losing in the process their steady and derelict image. Artists and designers who were originally drawn into the area by its low rents have made a significant contribution to this regeneration.

They've been helped in this by the activities of the Bluecoat Display Centre, which was established to exhibit and sell contemporary work by designer-makers in a variety of media. (You'll find the Centre in the laundry of the former Bluecoat School, which was built in 1717 to educate the orphans of seafarers.) The exceptionally high quality of the work in this show is a reflection of what is happening in Hackney, but is also a fair indication of the Centre's reputation and ability to attract, and, more importantly, sell the work of some of the best designer-makers in Britain today. Sculptor Thomas Hill is happy to be showing at the Bluecoat Centre again: "It has an excellent client base: people seem really enthusiastic." His views are



echoed by textile designer Rachael Howard. She grew up in Merseyside before moving south in the early Nineties. "Liverpool has become quite lively over recent years. It was always Manchester that had the interesting work, but Liverpool is bubbling upwards."

So what's on show here? Thomas Hill's wire birds and animals are not

chicken wire constructions reminiscent of forms destined to be covered with papier-mâché, but simple, evocative outlines - yellow hens, pike, greyhounds - conjured into life from the barest of skeletons. Occasionally he adds cut and painted sheet-steel, although this in no way detracts from the lightness of the pieces.

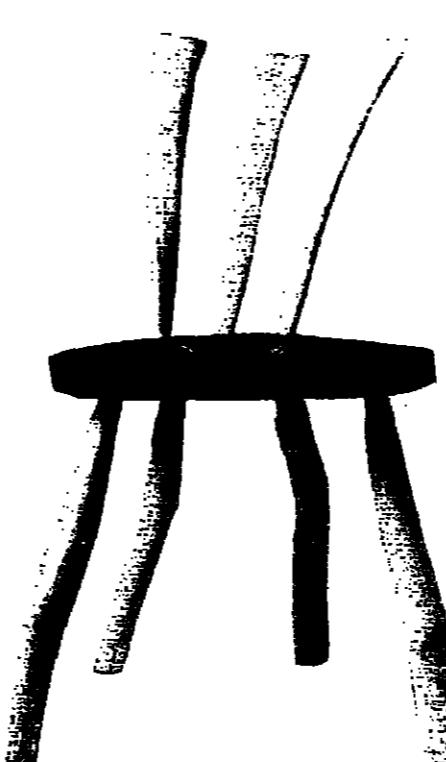
Rachael Howard combines quirky screen-printed drawings with appliquéd fabrics and machine embroidery to produce cushions, wall-hangings, scarves and ties. Her subjects are everyday scenes and activities which she captures with a comic vitality.

Thus Davies hews her chairs from green (unseasoned) timber -

elm, ash, oak, holly or cherry - using traditional green woodworking techniques. Much of the work is done by hand and, as a result, each piece is a one-off. Batch production is impossible. Initially inspired by the simplicity of Welsh stick chairs, she has now developed a way of working with the shapes revealed in the split timber.

Bettina Kunkel also specialises in one-off pieces of furniture. She only uses British, European or North American woods for her freestanding pieces, using rarer timbers such as yew and rippled lime when they are available. Her work is influenced by art deco designs and the simplicity of Japanese furniture.

Emma O'Dare's decorative glass



From left to right: Thomas Hill's Whippet 1998, from £250; Titus Davies' English greenwood chair made of ash with an elm seat, £225; detail from Rachael Howard's 'Animal Panimal' wall-hanging, 130 x 200 cm, £1,200

vessels recycle old glass using the ancient technique of *pâte de verre*. Her glass looks volcanic, not full but phosphorescent, and full of light.

All these makers are linked by the vitality of their work. This energy is also apparent in the other exhibits, including Stan Tucker's geometric and vibrantly coloured textile hangings; Nicholas Arroyave-Portela's undulating clay vessels; and Karen Bunting's monochrome jugs, plates and bowls, delicately decorated with spots and stripes.

Obviously, as a selling exhibition, you can buy what's on display, but don't forget, if someone else has beaten you to that perfectly poised wire chicken or you'd prefer a turkey buzzard, you can always commission exactly what you want.

DIONA GREGORY

Hackney Contemporaries runs 9 February to 6 March, Mon-Sat, 10am-5.30pm at the Bluecoat Display Centre, Bluecoat Chambers, School Lane, Liverpool, L1 3BX. Tel: 0151-709 4014. You can e-mail the gallery on crafts@bluecoat.u-net.com, or visit its website at <http://bluecoatcharts.merseyworld.com>

The Rover's return

The new 75 could finally give Rover access to the premier league. By Gavin Green

THE INDEPENDENT ROAD TEST

This is the rebirth of Rover, the beginning of a new era for the company. If I had £10 for every time a Rover executive had uttered those words at a press conference, I'd have enough money to mount a takeover bid for the firm.

"Crucial new model", "developed without compromise", "proof that Britain can build a world beater"... They were all there - the clichés, the rallying cries. Some things never change.

But fortunately for Rover, some things do change, and the quality of the engineering is one of them. The new 75 is an extremely competent car that deserves to sell well. It is classy, mature and genteel, and should appeal to people who want a quality car but not the Flash Harry badge that can go with it. If BMW is Versace and Audi is Hugo Boss, then the Rover 75 is Austin Reed or top-range M&S.

In some ways, it genuinely does represent a new beginning for Rover. It is the first car developed since the BMW takeover of 1994, and is the first Rover for 20 years that is not just a rebodied, re-engineered Honda. It does use some BMW kit, including much of the electronics, the manual gearbox and the turbo-diesel engine. In other ways, it is all new.

The 75 follows the plan of BMW's boss, Bernd Pischetsrieder, for Rover to "make cheaper Jaguars". On the whole, it feels like a smaller Jag saloon. It is a soothng car, not a sports car; a steady car, not a sensational car, an understated machine, not a head-turner.

It is aimed at the BMW 3-series and the Audi A4 (small prestige cars, in other words) and the top-end tinselled Mondeos, Passats and Vectras. Mid-size Volvos and Saabs are also a target. It is a touch shorter than the BMW 5-series, and a tad bigger than a Mondeo. The styling has many traditional Rover cues - chrome strip down the side, chrome quarter-bumpers, chrome sills, chrome rear number-plate



More dash than flash: the 75 could be the 'crucial new model' Rover has been promising for years

surround and chrome door-handles.

The nose is a little Euro-generic and dull, yet the rump is more fetching, being rather Bentley Continental R-like. A Rover PR man called it "tight-arsed", before accepting

that wasn't the best description.

Now are "tight-arsed" people likely to be queuing up to buy it? The 75 is priced above Passats and Mondeos, in keeping with Rover's desire to be seen as a premium brand.

The cabin has a deep plank of curved walnut for a dash, large lounge-chair seats and quality carpet. The cabin is not particularly roomy: rear legroom is tight, and the rear seat has been shaped for two occupants only. The overall effect is very old-world England. I'm not convinced about the oval, white-faced 'Art Deco' instruments, which are harder to read than conventional fare. Yet, on the whole, the cabin has an air of civilised gentility.

The 2.5 V6 auto is the choice, though. A luxury car needs automatic transmission, and the Japanese five-speed autobox mates well with the British-built V6. The 75 2.5 litre V6 auto is a car which Jaguar owners, wishing to downsize, could live happily with. It will also represent a strong challenge to Jaguar's new S-type V6, which hits the showroom just before the Rover.

Deliveries of the 75 begin in June - a couple of months later than Rover had hoped. Cars won't leave the factory until BMW standards are achieved, they vow.

I hope they're right, because the quality of the cars at the press launch wasn't good enough. Bits of trim fell off some, and many models had high levels of wind noise.

Quite why sub-standard cars were being evaluated by the world's press is a question which Rover's bosses might like to dwell on. If they bring the launch of the 75 - fundamentally the best Rover in years - then they really do deserve the wrath of the market.

SPECIFICATIONS

Make and model: Rover 75 2.5 V6 Connoisseur £24,025 (cheapest 75 model is the 1.8 Classic, at £18,275).	a bullet-proof build quality.
Engine: 2497cc, V6, 24 valves, 177 bhp at 6500 rpm.	Sportier, faster and smaller than the 75.
Transmission: Five-speed automatic or five-speed manual gearbox.	Ford Mondeo 2.5 V6 Ghia £18,680. Much cheaper than the 75, but performance as good. Feels less luxurious.
Performance: (Automatic) maximum speed 134mph, 0-60mph in 8.9 seconds.	Volkswagen Passat 1.8T 20V SE £18,855. Attractive alternative to the Rover. Handsome, roomy and terrific value. Turbo engine very brisk.
RIVALS	Volvo S70 2.5T £23,855. An ageing car soon to be replaced. Yet it's tough and safe, and recent styling upgrades give it a modern feel.

Audi A4 2.4 SE £24,862. Smaller and more cramped than the 75. Modern looks and

vast design department with studios in Germany, Japan and America. Yet Mattin is given the credit for the S-class's look - a great achievement, for it is one of the beautiful cars of the *fin de siècle*, mixing grace, modernity and Mercedes tradition.

Mattin is also responsible for the external styling of the baby A-class, probably the decade's most radical car.

It's not just in Stuttgart - Mercedes' home town - where English auto artists prosper. Anthony Grade, nephew of the late Sir Lew, is vice-president for car design at Renault in recent years perhaps Europe's most progressive maker in terms of

form and function and renowned for its lateral thinking. Its Scenic mini-MPV, which Grade helped conceive, created a whole new type of car. The latest Clio was also designed under his leadership, and he has had a big hand in the latest Espace and the Laguna. Grade, in turn, reports to Patrick Le Quement, who is responsible for all Renault design, including trucks. Le Quement, possibly Europe's greatest active vehicle designer, is an Anglo-Frenchman.

Volvo was never renowned for design, its cars - all square edges and boxy shapes - almost anti-style objects. That was until Englishman Peter Horbury came

on the scene as chief designer. Horbury is responsible for the latest breed, including the S80 saloon and handsome V40 estate. He has made Volvos sexy.

Audi's street style, on the other hand, has been noted for years. Ask designers to list the best-designed cars, and most will mention Audi. Much of that good work is down to an Englishman, Chris Bird. He was responsible for the exteriors of the Audi A4 and A6 and had a big say in the A6 and the new TT sports car.

These Michelangelos of the motorway are four of the finest-looking production cars ever. Admirers of Bird include Ford. The US giant, which has been

Leaded petrol is finally being scrapped at the end of this year. By James Ruppert

Heavy metal is on its way out



Classic cars may be exempt

IF YOU can believe what you read, come 1 January 2000 you might just find a Boeing 747 crash-landing in your back garden, or your pop-up toaster refusing to pop.

What you may not know is that there is also a millennium fuel bug, which will see leaded petrol banned from forecourts by the end of this year. Fears about the phasing out have triggered lots of calls to the AA's Technical Advice department.

Yet in many cases, they need never have called in the first place.

For instance, owners of older model

Nissan Micras driving an average of 12,000 miles a year over the last three years will have spent almost £900 extra by sticking to four-star leaded petrol when they could easily have switched to unleaded.

If you only use your classic for a few thousand miles each year, for fair weather fun, the chances are that because it has been running on leaded for so long, the engine has enough "leaded memory" to survive. Some specialists say this could be for up to 20,000 miles.

At that point and if you are a high mileage old car user you might consider installing higher specification valve seats. On a simple four-cylinder engine that will cost £100-£250, but on a complicated V8, budget for several thousand.

There is a third alternative though - additives. In countries where lead has been banned, including Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Austria, lead replacement fuel and additives are used for lead-only cars. Lead replacement fuel is not yet sold in the UK and there is no British standard for the available additives which are currently undergoing engine durability tests.

Over the counter you can buy STP Lead Substitute, which is phosphorous based, whilst Wynns' sodium-based LubriValve has been successfully used in the USA and New Zealand.

So how long have we got until the lead runs out? According to the UK Petroleum Industry Association: "We anticipate that sales will cease by the third quarter of 1999. We have to allow for retailers to deplete stocks and flush out their systems."

BRITAIN MAY be a motor industry minnow, without a single large car maker to call our own, but we still play a crucial role in designing some of the world's finest cars.

Just the other day I attended a presentation to launch the new Mercedes S-class, probably the world's most accomplished car. And during the speeches/video presentation/meal/handover of press kits, it emerged that an English designer was responsible for the looks.

Steve Mattin, from Bedford, is a graduate of Coventry University's excellent car design course. Designs are team efforts, of course, and Mercedes has a

whole new type of car.

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These Michelangelos of the motorway are four of the finest-looking production cars ever. Admirers of Bird include Ford. The US giant, which has been

a very acquisitive mood recently, has just hired him to be its director of design for small- and medium-sized cars - a huge coup for Ford. Bird, 42, is a Royal College of Art graduate who began working for Ford in 1981 before moving to Audi in 1986.

There are many more talented Brits, big on road vogue. Martin Smith was one of the key

designers of the original Audi Quattro. Based in Germany, he's now responsible for the look of upcoming small- and medium-sized Opels and Vauxhalls. Geoff Lawson, Jaguar's director of design, has the XK8 sports car on his CV, and that is reckoned to be one of the best shapes of the

90s. He also did the current XJ saloon. Ian Callum designed the drop-dead gorgeous Aston Martin DB7 and the equally enticing Aston Project Vantage concept car whose styling is set to hit production in a few years.

The list could go on and on.

They are all making the streets a more cheerful and stimulating place and improving our visual environment, just as good architects and clothes designers do. It is just a pity that there is no large UK-owned car maker that they can work for. The biggest indigenous maker we've got now is tiny TVR. And what's TVR's main strength? You guessed it - great style.

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MY WORST CAR

EDDIE SHAH'S MINI

Taking a gamble on a Mini

I HONESTLY don't think that I have owned a worst car. For me, the motor car is a fabulous expression of freedom. It gets you precisely where you want to go, which isn't as stupid a statement as it may sound. Purely as a business tool, I have found them invaluable as a mobile office. That is why my cars always look so untidy inside, whether they have been Minis or Bentleys.

So every car I've had, in some way, reflected my personality at that particular time. My first car was a Standard 8, which was owned between seven of us. It cost £17 and I remember that it also cost £17 to insure. It leaked in water like a sieve, but proved to be very useful.

If you really push me, I might admit that the car I won in a poker game was hardly ideal, though it served me very well. I was playing poker with a few cast members of Coronation Street, among whom was a good friend of mine, Bill Roache. The debt was £25 and it was suggested that I take a car in payment, which I did. It was a bog-standard Mini, but it had a paint scheme, which made it look like a Mini Cooper.

The roof was black and the bodywork was red. These cars had subframes, which held them together, and the rear one had rotated away. The only way that I could keep it in one piece was to tack some carpet down at the back. On my way into Manchester on the M62 when it rained, which happened quite often, the carpet would gradually soak up the water. I would hear a huge sucking noise and the floor would disappear. I would have to stop the car on the hard shoulder, then run back 100 yards to collect the carpet, roll it up, dry it out and tack it down again.

This was my first car when I started in newspapers selling advertising. It was such an embarrassing sight that I

PROPERTY

Buyers go in for old not new

Purchasers looking for a home with an old-fashioned period feel won't settle for any imitations. By Penny Jackson

It is an irony that many people who live in old houses, and express horror at the thought of buying a new home, are often among the first to say that they would love to build from scratch: "Give us a site and we'll show how we would really like to live." But take them to the homes on offer now and they will run a mile, back to the last century.

Are they prejudiced beyond hope or simply not being given what they want? A recent survey by the

time and money on research, but it can be rather like preaching to the converted. If they focus just on their pool of customers, they will be hearing from only 28 per cent of the home-owning population.

"They need to study the occupiers who don't usually buy new homes," says Yolande Barnes, of F P D Savills Research. "These buyers have to be seduced. It is no good just matching the second-hand market; it has to be exceeded."

In leafy Wandsworth, in south-west London, a house that sells for £1m no longer gives cause for comment. Buyers have moved southwards in search of space they can afford, and for a choice of good schools. Generally, this means Victorian or Edwardian, four or five bedrooms, two or three bathrooms, a garden and close to the common.

So a plot in a good street is a rare opportunity to woo buyers away from the old. Thirystone Homes did their homework. Two red-brick, Edwardian-style, semi-detached houses mirror in almost every respect their neighbours in Lyford Road, with the extra advantage of off-street parking. The high ceilings demolish the usual criticism of feeling like being cramped.

The drawing room is comfortably large and the kitchen runs into a light and sunny family room. At the top of the house, under the eaves, is a study and studio bedroom with

'You have to create an illusion of old money – of something that's been lived in'

Popular Housing Forum concludes that the new homes market in the UK is a niche operation appealing to a small sector of the population. Some 72 per cent have not bought, or would not consider buying, new homes and tend to think of them as boxy, cramped and homogenous. While the vast majority of those who took part in the survey opted for a traditional facade, there was a strong demand for a re-thinking about the way we live.

All good developers will spend



Lyford Villas, an example of a new home that tries hard to overcome buyers' prejudices

bathroom. As a package, these are all features that local buyers would have on their list. But just as it seems to be there, it stumbles and falls.

The "executive home" touch is the spoiler. A top-to-toe tiled bathroom and mirrored bedroom cupboards are more hotel than home. And these are buyers who are likely to want a coal fire, not look-alike gas. They have wet labradors and children with muddy boots but nowhere to put either. It is not that these houses won't sell well, but that they are unlikely to break through the old/new barrier.

"Everything south of the river

gets stamped with the Surrey mark," says Jonathan Seal, of Hampton International. "London buyers are specialised, and know from experience exactly what they like. They are prepared to pay for houses with good hallways, high ceilings, French windows, wooden sash windows, larders, large south-facing rooms. They don't mind much about formal dining rooms or garages.

"There is no guarantee that the developer you are advising will instruct you in the end. That's the name of the game. It is tempting for some to tell a developer what he wants to hear."

Often the advice can be simple. Margaret McKenna, of John D Wood's Battersea office, has suggested that housebuilders employ a local interior designer to avoid the inevitable clash of style that can put off buyers attracted to the area.

A great deal of money can be wasted on putting things on floors and walls that typical purchasers don't like. And if buyers find properties overpriced and overrated, it is often because they act on the valuation, but not the specifications. "We might have to say that we can't now sell their property for £500,000 because they haven't done anything

we suggested," says John Collard, of Robert Holmes in Wimbledon.

It is not as though buyers in the second-hand market are difficult to read. Estate agents' particulars, and glossy style magazines, give a blueprint at a glance. "You have to

make for easy living. But new London houses are more difficult to get right than flats. The one thing that really doesn't work is brand name marketing."

At Lyford Villas there is a stone plaque between the two front doors. It reads: "Thirystone Homes 1996." Surely the last thing any buyers spending more than £300,000 want is to be seen advertising a product, however discreetly.

"Staircases can be wider, and the plumbing and wiring should

make for easy living. But new London houses are more difficult to get right than flats. The one thing that really doesn't work is brand name marketing."

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Lyford Road Villas, priced from £375,000 through agents Robert Trindle (0181-767 2222)

2,000, a space odyssey: where to find it, how much to pay

Forget the Dome – rent your own millennium party space, but be prepared to pay the price. By Mary Wilson

NOW WE are well into 1999, people are thinking seriously about what they are going to do to celebrate the passing of the millennium. A good number of families are considering renting a property for the New Year week to entertain their friends and guests.

In response, house owners are starting to put up their homes for rental for just that week, encouraged by the lure of mega rents, possibly up to five times the normal going rate.

Suzanne Coker, who lives with her husband, James, in Barton-on-the-Heath in the Cotswolds, has a large house with an adjoining cottage which she is just starting to let out. "We had considered inviting a few friends up for the millennium weekend and putting them up in the cottage. But we have been told by local rental agents that we could get a very good return and that is just too tempting."

The cottage, which sleeps five, with a large dining room, sitting room and wood-burning stove, is usually let



Suzanne Coker hopes her Cotswold cottage will subsidise a dream holiday

John Lawrence

for £350 to £400 a week, but with the possibility of earning at least £200 for that one week, they hope to take a short, but extravagant, holiday later in the year. "We will just stay with friends," says Suzanne.

Although the Cokers are looking at doubling their rent, larger properties are being let for up to five times the norm. Warren de Langle of Blandings, the country-house holiday-rental agent, which is offering a number of properties for the millennium, says: "Most of the larger houses are going to groups of individuals or couples wishing to celebrate the event, rather than families."

"While these groups are often willing to spend greater sums of money, many of our owners prefer families, as they are less likely to bring in the millennium with a 'bang'."

The most expensive property the company is offering for the New Year week is Hatton Castle, near Turriff, Aberdeenshire. This has eight bedroom suites, and will cost £55,000 per week, excluding staff. For a little bit less, you could take Braxted Park in Witham,

Essex, which is a nine-bedroom country house, at £30,000 for the week.

Then there is St Catherine's Court near Bath, Somerset & Avon, a 14th-century property, which accommodates 16, for £40,000 or, Widecombe Manor in Devon, a 19th-century manor house sleeping 14, for £15,000 – or just over £1,000 a week per person.

Leon Betchley of Countrywide

Residential Lettings covers the south coast of England. He says: "I am getting a awful lot of enquiries from the Home Counties and London, especially from large families or parties. Within the last two weeks we have taken 50 enquiries."

He reckons that a four-bedroomed property usually let out for £450 to £500 a week could easily command £1,500

to £2,000, and he is advertising for suitable property. He already has a few houses on his books in the Isle of Wight, and these include Cove Cottage, a three-bedroom cottage at Ventnor; The Barn, a four-bedroom house at Whitwell, and Stoneplace Cottage with three bedrooms at Ventnor. They will all be available for around £2000.

Many of the properties already

available for renting over the New Year are in Scotland. Robert Rathay of Finlayson Hughes of Perth, which has published a special millennium brochure, says: "We have been inundated with enquiries for large and exclusive venues."

Several of the 16 properties are already booked, and of those still available you could take Burnknowe at Lochgilphead, Argyll, sleeping eight for £5,000 a week, Denfield Farmhouse in Trinity Gask, Perthshire, for £5,500, or Lochiehead at Auchtermurchy, Fife, sleeping 14, plus four in a cottage, for £12,500 a week.

Knight Frank's Edinburgh office has also been asked by some of its clients to find tenants over the millennium week. Properties up for grabs range from stately homes to castle and shooting lodges. "Some are fully staffed, others are self-catering farmhouses, and packages are being tailored to meet people's individual requirements wherever possible," says Colin Strang Steel.

One property available is Strathtyrum at St Andrews, Fife. Twelve people staying here would have use of the drawing room, library, billiard room and dining room, and the £20,000 for seven nights includes all meals and drink.

Also in Scotland, F D D Savills has several properties available for that week. On the Airlie Estate, for example, Cortachy Castle, which sleeps at least 20 people, is available for £24,000 for four days, and Wellbank Cottage, which sleeps six to eight people, £2,000 for the week.

You should, of course, insure your home while it is rented out over the millennium week. A standard buildings and contents insurance will not cover the property if it is let and anything untoward occurs, and it is unlikely that a high street or telephone insurance company would countenance such an extra liability.

Countrywide say it is encouraging people to take a very much larger deposit than usual – £300–£400, as opposed to £50–£100 – to cover any damage. And it is offering an insurance package covering all liabilities, which will cost around £150–£200, depending on what has to be covered.

Suzanne Coker, 01603 674603; Blandings, 01223 233444; Finlayson Hughes, 01738 451111; Countrywide Residential Lettings, 01983 821111; Knight Frank, 0131-225 8171; F D D Savills, 01356 628600

STEPPING STONES ONE COUPLE'S PROPERTY STORY



East (Dulwich) is Eden for Ann Ball and Mark Chilvers

SINCE 1990 Ann Ball and her partner Norm have bought four south London properties. They now live in a three-storey Victorian house in East Dulwich.

It was in 1985 when, at the age of 30 and in a stable job as a housing association director, Ann decided "to get into the house-owning democracy".

Her first flat was an impulse buy, a one-bed conversion carved from the hall floor of a house in Brockley for £24,500. "It had the most amazing huge rooms looking on to an enormous garden."

But the prospect of external renovations was worrying: "It was a big house and the other flats were mostly rented so I knew that one day I could get saddled with a large bill." In 1987 Ann, a lover of Victoriana, sold for £25,000 and bought a freehold property in Deptford's Friendly Street.

The two-bedroom, Victorian cottage had a walled garden which, although "a mess", was lovingly restored by Ann, who created raised beds and a patio. She enjoyed the house and garden but not the noise from the busy road.

In 1989, having met Norm, she decided to rent out her house and move into a two-bedroom flat in Clapham which Norm had bought for £25,000 in 1980. The rental was not a total success: "The first tenants were fine but the second lot junked it. When they left I found dirty washing-up and pans everywhere with beans stuck to them."

Prices had bottomed out, but in 1991 Ann sold at the purchase price and, having had a daughter, Alice, decided to buy a family home. She and Norm paid off the Clapham flat's mortgage and rented it out but could not find an affordable house nearby.

East Dulwich, a few miles away, offered more for money and prompted another of Ann's impulses. She remembers saying: "I have to have this... It was fabulous, you could just see the potential." It cost £117,000 in 1992, and features such as a butler sink and original brass taps in the bathroom help understand the instant appeal.

The couple have carried out improvements such as resiting the kitchen and adding a conservatory – and while Norm will "never move to another house where he'll have to do all this work", it is hard to see why they would ever want to.

GINETTA VEDRICKS

Those moves in brief...
1980 – two-bedroom flat for £25,000, now worth £180,000.

1985 – one-bedroom flat for £24,500, sold for £45,000.

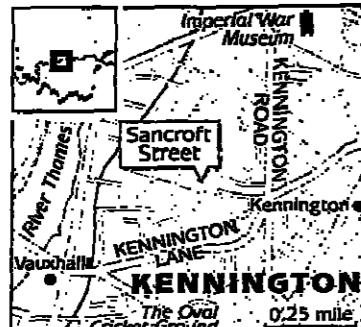
1987 – £26,995 house, sold for same in 1991.

1992 – three-storey house for £117,000, now worth £200,000.

If you'd like to be featured write to: Nic Cicuti, Stepping Stones, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL. £100 for the best story.

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Kennington's handsome Georgian housing has always been a lure for politicians due to the area's proximity to Parliament

preparing the ground for post-war council construction

A price tag of £400,000 is good value, says Johnny Male of Daniel Cobb estate agents, in that "equivalent properties in Clapham and on the other side of the river sell for twice the price, or even more." Some three-bedroom houses in the area sell for less than £200,000, and a converted

Victorian school on Kennington Road has yielded large bright flats which have vaulted ceilings.

Few shops and good schools are the area's weak points, although the former is palpably improving. "The area has changed dramatically in the last 10 to 15 years. Kennington used to be virtually all rented," says Mr Male. "Now, with some Duchy of Cornwall

properties for sale, many more homes are owner-occupied. And with that, shops are coming in."

Kennington Park Road, Kennington Lane and Kennington Road intersect to form a small triangle. Prime Kennington is within the three sides and on its borders (such as Denry, Sancroft and Courtenay Streets).

The council estates dotted through-

out the area vary in age and architecture but still tend to be predominantly council tenanted. As one local agent notes: "Your next-door neighbour can move out and be replaced by the neighbours from hell." These properties appeal to investors and also to owner-occupiers on extremely limited budgets.

ROBERT LIEBMAN

Prices: Three-storey early-Victorian houses can sell for as little as £150,000-£160,000 but, says Johnny Male of Cobb estate agents, in the squares and nice pockets, houses start at £250,000 and "the lowest prices are really creeping toward £300,000". A decent two-bedroom flat costs about £135,000.

Bottom Fishing: Alan Fisher estate

agents sells one-bedroom ex-council flats for less than £50,000, and two- and three-bedroom flats for not much more. They also sell inexpensive split-level maisonettes and top-flat combos with interesting residential or live/work possibilities.

Transport: If you are anywhere in Kennington, you are near good public transport. Kennington station

(Northern Line, zone 2) is on Kennington Park Road, just down from Elephant and Castle (Bakerloo and Northern Lines, zone 1). Vauxhall Station is nearby, and several bus lines serve the West End.

Ministry of Funny Walks: A plaque marks the house at 287 Kennington Road where Charlie Chaplin lived. It is one of several Chaplin family

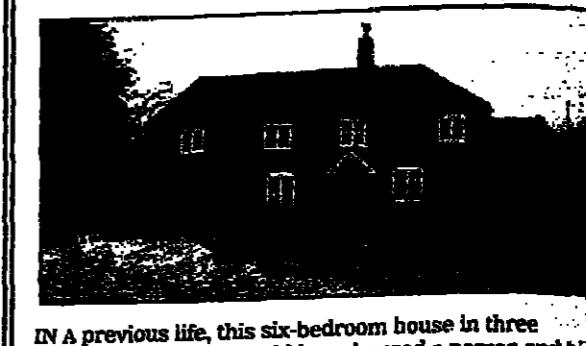
residences in Kennington, including 39 Methley Street (through Daniel Cobb for £299,950, also apparently with a Chaplin plaque) and 3 Pownall Terrace, which was destroyed during the Blitz.

A Clarion Call for Clarity: Some Kennington property particulars boast of being within the Division Bell Area, which (says a local estate

agent) means 20 minutes by horse and cart or (says Our Women in Parliament) eight minutes by foot. Council Tax: Kennington falls between two stools: Lambeth exacts £431 for Band A and £1,294 for H, and Southwark insists on £524 and £1,573 respectively.

Estate Agents: Alan Fraser 0171-587 1004; Daniel Cobb 0171-735 9510

THREE TO VIEW
HOUSES WITH A PAST



IN A previous life, this six-bedroom house in three-quarters of an acre would have housed a parson and his large, quite possibly impious family. Now the Old Parsonage in Fleckney, near Market Harborough, in Leicestershire, is a private home. It has a conservatory reached via French doors from the music room, lounge and dining rooms with period fireplaces and a family-sized kitchen with fitted oven and hob. A solid-fuel Aga may be bought separately. The ground floor has a boot room, study, workshop and studio with a gallery. The grounds boast a herb garden, greenhouse and paddock. £235,000, details from Frank Innes (01858 410311).



A TABLET on the front of The Old School commemorates its opening as the village school in South Warnborough, Hampshire. The house was originally built for the poor children of the parish, aged seven and above, and finally closed in 1952. With its Grade II listing, it is now a three-bedroom home (two of the bedrooms are on the ground floor) with a 19th-century drawing room, a study, a dining room and a large kitchen. There is a mezzanine gallery and a master bedroom with en suite facilities on the first floor. The gardens are old and traditional and include a double garage. £275,000 through Hill & Morrison, telephone 01256 702892 for details.



IT HAS been a long time since the forge rang to the sound of the hammer and anvil, as it is now used for storage and garaging, with a vehicle inspection pit. The outbuilding comes with the house, known as The Forge, which is a three-bedroom dwelling with more than an acre and a half of gardens. Built in the early 19th century and Grade II listed, it is the first time that the building has been sold on the open market apart from the Highclere Estate, which is five miles from Newbury, in Berkshire. It has a sitting room with open fireplace, dining room with a wood-burning stove in the hearth and a large, spacious kitchen with a beamed ceiling. The guide price is £290,000. Details are available from Strutt & Parker (01635 521707).

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